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Phases of France

on the Eve of the Revolution

by Helen Clergue



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TO
THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

Table of Contents

	PAGE
PREFACE	9
1. THE ANGLO-FRENCH ENTENTE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	15
2. THE DUC DE CHOISEUL : STATESMANSHIP UNDER THE OLD RÉGIME	33
3. THE DUCHESSE DU MAINE : POLITICAL INTRIGUE AS EXEMPLIFIED IN HER PSEUDO-COURT	75
4. THE DUC DE LIANCOURT : REFORM BEFORE THE REVOLUTION	129
5. MADAME NECKER : THE LAST OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SALONS	179

Preface

FRANCE with her indomitable courage, patience and discipline, her moral and intellectual quality, is the admiration of all aspiring minds. Yet by the English-speaking nations on either side of the Atlantic closer personal acquaintance with and closer knowledge of her national life are desirable. The object of the following pages is to aid in this to some extent by elucidating phases in the past life of France at a crucial time, and especially the personal ties which at a particular period, notwithstanding constant war between them, united in an unprecedented degree France and England in the eighteenth century. In addition, in individual living types may be perceived the progressive social aims which actuated many of the nobility in France before the Revolution, the patriotic efforts of her statesmen, the intellectual interests which, decadent as was monarchy and courtier, were present even in the most frivolous circles of French society.

The events of history being proximately the results of the actions of men, it follows that the lives of influential persons illustrate particular national phases. The phase which is summarized under the title *The Anglo-French Entente of the Eighteenth Century* was intimately personal. Personal tastes and predilections, personal friendships,

Preface

personal appreciation of political freedom, of science and of literature formed its groundwork.

The Revolution abruptly broke the strong personal ties which united several groups of the French and English people, a drawing together of opposite and opposing nations so far as were then articulate, a rapprochement unique in history. The popularity of the Entente before 1914 permitted the hope of a renewal in a democratic age of the happy and fruitful association of that earlier period. To this has been added union in the most important and critical war ever waged.

At the time of so-called decadence in France never were so many reforms. The most frivolous age in its history was the most exacting. The French noble before the Revolution, for instance, has often been pictured as an idler and a trifler. The monarchy, always adverse to the nobility, had, in fact, under Louis XV all but succeeded in ruining it both morally and materially; also, communication between nations was entering upon its modern development, and influences from without were not all of the best but, though the nobleman in France is seen often to be affected by these disintegrating influences, there is another side to the picture where he shines as the patriotic leader and as the unselfish reformer.

The phase of reform in France which preceded the Revolution cannot be better understood than by a knowledge of the life of the democratic Duc de Liancourt. Statesmanship, and statesmanship

Preface

at its best, of the Old Régime is personified in the Duc de Choiseul; its political intrigues by the Duchesse du Maine. In Madame Necker we see the culmination of a feature of the social system of the age—the salon of the eighteenth century.

My object then has been to exemplify French history at a particular and crucial period by the study of a few individuals who in one way or another were characteristic of their country and their time, and thus make events appear more vivid and living to readers of to-day. They will see that the same mental and spiritual energy and ardour have been exerted in France in one generation as in another, whatever may have been the form of government.

The purest and oldest race in Europe, French culture rests on experience. More than in any country is tradition deeply rooted in France. It is the key-note of national character; the strongest of French traits. The respect the living show the dead is one of its manifestations. All the fundamental French traits throughout her history are equally powerful and pre-eminent in the France of to-day when the entire people has a voice in the destinies of their country. The way in which France fought and endured in the war, the way in which she is conquering in the peace—by silent toil—still further arouses our admiration and should stimulate our interest in her history.

The Anglo-French Entente in the Eighteenth Century

Chapter I : *The Anglo-French Entente in the Eighteenth Century*

I

IN the upheaval of society effected by the French Revolution the Anglo-French Entente of the eighteenth century—an historical phase at once distinct and remarkable—was submerged. To-day, after Englishmen and Frenchmen have fought as comrades not only in France, but in many parts of the world, it may well be recalled and realized.

Friendships are stimulated and consolidated by opportunity and common grounds of thought; international friendships may be deferred or increased by the same causes and for the same reasons.

The social and intellectual rapprochement which united important sections of the people of France and of England in the eighteenth century was more remarkable than that with which Edward the Seventh's reign will always be associated, for it occurred not after many years of peace, but in the age in which England won Canada from France, in which she seized French India, in which she fought against France on the side of Prussia. It was a rapprochement possible only because deep-seated enmity never existed between France and England during

Phases of France

their struggles for power on land and sea. Hatred was not engendered by either, for French and English sailors and soldiers have never been other than chivalrous combatants.

Nor did losses and gains in war ever alter the fact that France was the most highly cultivated national product extant, and of this Englishmen never lost sight; on the other hand, international rivalry and warfare did not prevent English progressive political and philosophical ideas from being appreciated in, and from penetrating into, France, from being there inculcated, religiously one may say, to the very eve of the Revolution. Yet another element of union existed. In the eighteenth century France and England only among nations united an old civilization with modern development, France and England only could pretend to both tradition and progress; they only, though old, were yet vigorously alive, to the rich results of experience being added, in the case of France, a national re-birth. Italy was a congeries of small and divided, if ancient, states; Spain's glory lay in the past; the rise of Russia, though marked, was slow and non-democratic; modern Germany was non-existent. Paris was the Mecca to all countries, the centre and the rendezvous of Western civilization, and the leaders in ideas and in high society of France and of England, and of France and of England only, *exchanged* visits and *exchanged* ideas.

The intellectual and social relations of France and England in the eighteenth century stand alone

The Anglo-French Entente

in the history of nations, and nothing comparable to them may be found elsewhere at any time. One has but to turn over the pages of the correspondence of the time to understand something of the warm human ties, as well as of the intellectual concord, which bound and drew together a society, leisured and lettered, large in both countries, uniting sympathetic minds and natures on the opposing shores—statesmen, men of letters, savants, artists, and pleasure-seekers.

The first minds of both countries were thus affected by actual contact; Lecky has well described it as "the remarkable junction of the French and English intellects." "There is not one of Voltaire's writings," says Lord Morley, "which does not bear the mark of his sojourn in England." And if the French capital exercised a spell over English visitors, if it had a refining influence on manners, and if its art and literature were studied and admired by Englishmen both in France and in the rich collections then in process of formation in England, the influence of England on France in the eighteenth century as late as the Revolution was deep and far reaching in its effects.

When it is examined it will be found that the Entente was not a mere accidental occurrence. Its moving force in France was the reaction from the political repression which existed in France under Louis XIV and Louis XV, it was an expression of desire for political freedom. In England Frenchmen seemed to see ideals of free government in

Phases of France

being, and they associated Englishmen with free institutions. It was a precursor of the Revolution. Around a basic movement there naturally arose many subsidiary forms of friendship and national appreciation, some trivial and unimportant, developing into mere fashions. These, interesting and amusing as they are to the observer of social foibles, cannot now hide from us the vital causes of the eighteenth-century Entente.

The influx of English political ideas into France was continuous after Montesquieu and Voltaire visited England early in the second quarter of the century, and the importance of the personal factor cannot be overestimated. Among the distinguished Frenchmen who, beside Voltaire, came between 1725 and 1775 to England and mixed in society were Maupertuis, the geometrician ; the great and wise Buffon, prose poet and scientific investigator ; the magistrate, Quesnay, the economist ; Helvétius, author of that subversive work, *De l'Esprit* ; the Abbé Morellet, one of the last survivors of the eighteenth-century philosophers and an admirer of Swift ; Prévost, Richardson's translator ; and, not the least important, Rousseau and Mirabeau. Beaumarchais, to rehabilitate himself with the Government, entered the secret service and overlooked in London the work of the army of political libellists there employed. The future martyr of the Revolution, Madame Roland, accompanied her husband on his frequent business journeys to London ; and the political views of Brissot, the constitutional reformer, another victim of the

The Anglo-French Entente

Revolution, were affected by his personal acquaintance with the English capital and by his observation of English political life. These are celebrated names, to which others as well known might be added.¹

Contemporaneous with the visits of Montesquieu and Voltaire to England was the opening in Paris of the Club de l'Entresol, in imitation of the English clubs, the political and philosophical gathering which exercised so wide an influence on French thought from 1774. Many Englishmen were counted among the first members of this famous society. English pamphlets and newspapers were taken in and discussed, and free opinions were advanced so constantly that it is not surprising that the Government under the Old Régime finally felt bound to suppress the Club de l'Entresol as a dangerous political centre.

At the same period in London, French Protestants frequently assembled at the well-known tavern, the Arc-en-Ciel, where they strenuously laboured to make known to their countrymen at home the revolutionary theories and discoveries of Bacon, Clarke, Locke, and Newton in various publications which were printed in England or in Holland and thence smuggled into France. A history of England was written in French by these exiles with the same object—that of bringing to the knowledge of

¹ In *The Relations of French and English Society* (1763-89), by C. H. Lockett, M.A., London, 1920, will be found a list of some of these visitors during the period above mentioned.

Phases of France

the French people the political freedom attained by the people of England.

The attraction of a sojourn in England to French thinkers was strong, but the lure of France took far greater numbers of Englishmen across the Channel; they included every grade and class of those who then travelled; they visited Paris for new ideas or for distraction at a period when a state of war for the most part existed between the two countries.

Lord Bolingbroke, Horace Walpole the Elder, and the travelled Scotchman, the Chevalier de Ramsay—so called by the French—were members of the Club de l'Entresol. Hume was keenly alive to the vivifying effect of Paris on the mind and, heralded by his writings, he was received with the greatest enthusiasm when, in 1763, he arrived in Paris as secretary to Lord Hertford.

Intellect has always been a key to French society. "I am writing to him (Hume) constantly," we read in a letter from Madame du Deffand—and a letter from Madame du Deffand was a passport to social success. Her imperious friend, Horace Walpole—writing from Strawberry Hill—could hardly believe, and was considerably shocked to learn, that the middle-class Scotch philosopher should be regarded in the most select circles of Paris with "a perfect veneration." In vain Walpole's scepticism and ill-humour! Hume became the fashion, and never was so ugly a man so popular—and with the most important and elegant ladies. He was

The Anglo-French Entente

the favourite of Julie de Lespinasse and also of the influential bourgeoisie Madame Geoffrin, as of the aristocratic Comtesse de Boufflers, the presiding genius at the Prince de Conti's parties—and every one knows how intimate he was with Turgot and with d'Alembert, and of his kindly endeavour to assist Rousseau and its by no means happy result.

Wilkes was found among Madame du Deffand's habitués, and Fox was received by her as a man should be "who"—she wrote epigrammatically—"possessed the greatest intellect in the world and who committed the greatest follies."

The visit of Garrick to Paris in 1764-5 was one of the striking episodes in the course of the Anglo-French Entente of the eighteenth century. It was not only as an actor that he was welcomed; he was entertained with an enthusiasm which was a culmination of this international friendship and goodwill. His portrait—this is but after all a trifling fact—was by desire of the Duke of Orléans painted by Carmontelle and is still in the Chantilly collection with the inscription on the back, "*Le Célèbre Garrick, tragique et comique. Carmontelle delineavit ad vivum 1765.*" The warmth of Garrick's reception was, however, no less remarkable than the sincerity and cordiality of the friendships which he formed and increased during this stay. D'Holbach, Helvétius, Suard, the Abbé Bonnet, to mention a few names only, were numbered among his intimates and remained his correspondents long after he had returned to London.

Phases of France

Certainly Englishmen could not in those days have been accused of insularity and they received a cordial welcome in France from all classes of society, beginning with the Court, and English frequenters of the clubs and salons of Paris were as much at home as in the drawing-rooms of Mrs. Thrale and of Mrs. Montagu, as at Holland House, at Brooke's or at White's. The inimitable charm, intellectual and social, of the Parisians drew to France, as we have said, all the classes of Englishmen then articulate. The Duke of York and Charles James Stuart were to be met with in the gardens and on the streets of Paris, and distinguished commoners—such as Burke and Gibbon—encountered the “Macaronis” of Piccadilly on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Pure pleasure-seekers, Lord Bath, Lord Ossory, and Lord March would find their companions Crawford “the fish,” and Hare “of many friends,” among the coterie which assembled about Madame du Deffand's “tonneau” at the convent of Saint Joseph. Diderot—despised by her—entertained the intellectual group of Englishmen to such an extent that his house was regarded by them as a rendezvous. Lady Sarah Bunbury, that delightful type of an English lady, Lady Hervey, equally admired in both capitals, as were Lady Pembroke, Lady Grenville, and the accomplished Mrs. Damer, are also well-known English names and types which are constantly recurring in French letters and memoirs before the Revolution severed most of the personal links which for the best part of a century so closely

The Anglo-French Entente

bound together the two main groups of Western civilization.

The Revolution in Russia found the English Government in 1917 more kindly inclined than that which declared war against the French in 1793, and it seems remarkable that in England, where were imbibed many of the ideas from the logical outcome of which France was then on the rack, only Fox and Grey came forward against Burke in Parliament as the champion of the French people in what they had been led to believe was a struggle for freedom. But the extreme hostility of the English Government to the French Revolution, and the danger incurred by foreigners remaining in Paris, did not keep Englishmen from the French capital in its time of greatest stress, and Priestley and Tom Paine—when he became a member of the Convention—still personified on the banks of the Seine the Anglo-French Entente. On the other hand, many a French constitutionalist, such as the patriotic and self-denying Duc de Liancourt—driven by an irony of fate before the whirlwind he had assisted in evoking—sought refuge under the hospitable roofs of English friends.

It was largely the result of the personal relations between France and England in the eighteenth century that gave the modern novel its orientation in France. Prévost, Richardson's translator, who arrived in England in 1728, at once was affected by the newly arisen English fiction, and as a result of this visit his characters were henceforth subjected to that moral analysis of which the psychological novel of our own day is the logical development. In the fact that Rousseau's *Héloïse* is based upon Prévost's translations of Richardson's *Clarissa*, we see the same influence. Julie de Lespinasse, whom we think of chiefly as the author of the famous *Love Letters*, was especially enamoured of the English novel and, in the endeavour to turn her mind from her tragic personal griefs, encouraged by Lord Shelburne, she wrote in imitation of Sterne and actually translated the *Sentimental Journey*. The translations of *Gulliver's Travels* and of *Robinson Crusoe*—to the great delight of the French people—also were the direct result of the visits of Frenchmen to England in this period, and of the consequent knowledge and appreciation of contemporary English literature.

Garrick had at heart the desire to maintain an Anglo-French stage which would undertake an

The Anglo-French Entente

interchange both of plays and players between the English and French capitals. His hopes were never realized, but an important event in the dramatic world which again sprang from Anglo-French intercourse was the repeated translation of Shakespeare into French.

As in France, so in England in the eighteenth century men of diverse pursuits and aims for the first time approached the various aspects and conditions of another country, not only with an inquiring and a sympathetic mind but from a practical point of view. With painstaking care Arthur Young explored the highways and byways of the French countryside, examining agricultural conditions ; of quite another description were the delightful studies, so typical of the period, of the artists Richard and Maria Cosway. But the interchange of visits, with its natural result of imitation, had many sequels, one of which, arising in large measure from personal intercourse, may be especially noted—an appreciation of nature and a love of country life, popularly believed in England to-day to be a native English characteristic, but which only had its beginnings in the eighteenth century and which in France was contemporaneous with Rousseau's "return to nature." Long-deserted châteaux were reopened and new ones were built, small pleasure-houses sprang up on the wooded heights above the Seine, and along the watercourses which meet and mingle with it, and his garden was planted or rearranged by the French châtelain after the

Phases of France

new fashion of his English friends. The reaction from the artificiality of the life of the early eighteenth and the previous century, which was stimulated by the writings of Rousseau, was increased by the desire to imitate the country habits of the English nobility.

The sketch which has been traced—insufficient though it is as a complete description of a unique international phase—gives in its main outlines the salient features of the Anglo-French Entente of the eighteenth century. This unique rapprochement was uprooted by the Revolution, yet it was significant of a future wider—a more complete—friendship, one which it is hoped and believed will be lasting. That the present Entente is no new development, but that friendship was conceived and flourished between such limited groups of the two peoples as then could meet, and during a period when a state of war existed between them, shows that the Entente of the eighteenth century arose because both France and England possessed similar moral and intellectual aptitudes and aspirations. The Revolution helped to bring political freedom to France and, as at no time had there been international bitterness between the two nations, it was certain that the Entente would revive in a larger form. The Crimean War united the two combatants in arms, and it was followed by a slight renewal of personal relations; but difference of language has kept the masses apart, and international difficulties have sometimes produced

The Anglo-French Entente

diplomatic coolness. But the fact emerges that there has, since 1870, existed two free and democratic nations close to each other, whose mental and moral affinities produced intimate personal relations in the eighteenth century. To Edward VII came the happy vision of taking up the eighteenth-century rôle, and we all now perceive its value and its necessity.

Personal friendship and mutual intellectual appreciation mainly characterized the earlier Entente. Charming and cultivated and discerning persons in France and in England found pleasure and profit in intimate intercourse. The Entente was even fashionable, though in so far as it was merely a fashion it had no permanent influence on either nation. But it sprang from more than fashion. It rested—when it is analysed—on a firmer foundation than fashionable valuation or than literary taste; it was based on the fundamental appreciation of two free peoples; for those who represented French thought and aspiration were at least free in mind, and they appreciated, and aspired to, political freedom as it was known in England. Compared, however, with the cordial relations of our own day a radical difference appears. French thinkers, it is true, visited England and sought by mingling in English society to gain a knowledge of the workings of the English political system, but in the eighteenth century the Entente was limited in extent and was in its essence aristocratic. The aristocracy of society, of letters and of art fore-

Phases of France

gathered intimately in Paris, but the international clubs and coteries, with their distinguished and clever habitués, were in their influence far removed from the movement of to-day, which is democratic, which is based on national sympathy and on common ideals of justice, freedom, and humanity. Cemented on the battlefield in a final struggle with an intolerable tyranny and a gross materialism and inhumanity, it has—one may hope—become a national and not a sectional rapprochement, which is the surest guarantee of its importance and of its permanence.

It has been my endeavour to point out from the experience of the past the importance of the personal factor in consolidating international relations. The problems which have arisen out of the war are many and various, and in regard to some of them there will always be conflict, it is therefore of vital importance that the Entente between France and England, which with America always have represented the forward moral and intellectual forces, should be permanent and, as far as may be, personal and democratic. The three democratic and powerful nations, England, France and America, are the guardians and the guarantors of free conditions which have been the slow and painful growth of centuries. The English idea of the freedom of the individual, passionately taken to themselves by the French, led not a little to the Revolution, with its benefits to democracy—results which it was Germany's aim in the Great War to overthrow. The moral and intellectual growth for which and

The Anglo-French Entente

y which France, England and America stand can, under the democratic systems which they have developed, only be safeguarded by an abiding entente, which again must be largely assured by individual effort. As the two nations have now in their entirety become self-realizing and articulate, the object should be to renew in a larger measure the eighteenth-century personal Entente. The sympathy between the two democracies, though sincere, is yet imperfect because neither has sufficient knowledge of the other. It should accordingly be the aim of every one to foster and increase this feeling by means which will become patent as we search for them, and for this purpose the eighteenth-century Entente, with its personal ties, its kindred tastes, its intellectual appreciation, and its common search after the ideal, may well serve as an example.

The Duc de Choiseul : Statesmanship
under the Old Régime

Chapter 2 : *The Duc de Choiseul : Statesmanship under the Old Ré- gime, 1719-1785*

I

TO that long-continued struggle known in history as the Seven Years' War, England largely added her colonial possessions and her command of the sea ; Germany the greater part of her territory. These enormous gains were made at the expense of France and of Austria, and a part of the price was the partition of Poland. Frederick II opposed Maria Theresa ; Choiseul was the antagonist of Pitt. Choiseul lost worlds and won ladies with the same gay exterior, fighting ably and struggling patiently against insurmountable odds. His diverse character I shall make an attempt to analyse for he was a typical statesman of the Old Régime.

The Duc de Choiseul was a statesman and a man of pleasure. Those who are born to a high position have often, in some degree, to combine business and social engagements in their lives, and the Duc de Choiseul played each part with conspicuous ability. For a long time he controlled

Phases of France

—so far as a private individual could control under a nearly absolute government—the foreign and domestic policy of France. The centre of a social as of a political circle, he was a grand seigneur both in Paris and at Chanteloup, living with the gayest of his contemporaries, neglecting none of the so-called pleasures of his time, enjoying women's society and talking and corresponding freely with men of letters.

A life so extraordinarily full and varied can be no more than outlined. Its political landmarks and inclinations may, however, be pointed out and some estimate formed of leading points in Choiseul's policy. His manner of life, so typical of his age and country, so unlike anything before or since, will only be lightly indicated, but a portrait may be realized of one of the most remarkable characters of the eighteenth century, the chief figure in a phase of French history.

"Cela durera bien autant que moi" was the thought with which Louis XV comforted himself in his declining years. It was in sharp contrast to Louis XIV's celebrated *mot*, "L'Etat c'est moi!" The sense of responsibility and the energy implied in the proud boast of Louis XIV were both wanting in his grandson, whose cynical saying indicates not only the difference between the personal characters of the two sovereigns, but the changes which had taken place between their times. The personal obligation which Louis XIV willingly took upon himself, his timid and irresolute successor found

The Duc de Choiseul

burden, and one which his manner of life continually tended to make heavier. When Louis XV at times abused himself, and attempted to introduce a personal and dominant note, independent of his council, into his foreign relations, it was in secret, and to the detriment of his ministers' work.

The times had radically altered since the Grand Monarque's one-man rule. Public opinion, stimulated by the philosophers, now exerted an influence so great that it must be acknowledged; the country could no longer bear, and was no longer in a state to furnish, the demands made upon it. The policy of Louis XV, who realized these facts, was a *laissez-vivre* policy. As he did not trouble himself about the future—the existing state of things would last his time, he hoped—he concerned himself little about the condition of the nation when it did not affect him personally. But he needs must have ministers who would insure security to his reign, give their master as little trouble as might be, and supply him with the sums required to provide him with paramours and favourites. To such a depth had sunk the king whom his hopeful subjects, in the early days of his reign, had named the “Well-loved.” It was fortunate for the nation that, with a king who held such views, in such times, he possessed a patriotic and a capable minister, for he had to grapple with no less an opponent than the elder Pitt, whose entire aim was, if possible, to cripple France, and who was waging a war of *outrance*. England and France were rivals in

Phases of France

almost every part of the world, and the struggle was ultimately to decide the fate of large territories beyond the seas.

The government of England and the Protestant succession were daily growing in strength. The monarchy was in decadence in France, which was ruled by a king who treated his conquests—so he boasted—“non en marchand mais en roi”—and therefore relinquished them. Unfortunately for this grand policy, the nation, like the individual then as now, which drove the closest bargain generally won, and the “nation of shopkeepers,” governed by men accustomed to business methods, was bound to succeed in a conflict between a constitutional and an absolute monarchy. Choiseul clearly saw the disadvantages of the old system and the advantages of constitutional liberty for a minister. In his memoirs he points out that in England the monarch may change his ministers but not, as in France, the constitution, or the laws, or make a treaty with a foreign power contrary to the interests of his country. This is an indictment of personal rule, as well as an indication of his own ministerial grievances and indicates the particular evils from which the country suffered while the king was under the influence of Madame du Barry, whose rule Choiseul had in vain opposed. The passage shows not only Choiseul’s liberal tendencies and the burdensome restrictions under which a patriotic minister had to labour in an absolute monarchy, but also that, when a popular minister could express

The Duc de Choiseul

ach views the days of absolute monarchy were inevitably drawing to an end.

The Seven Years' War was followed by a complete reversal in the grouping of the European states. England, directing her energies in every direction against France, entered into a secret alliance with Prussia, her old foe, who had hitherto relied upon the friendship of France; while France, the defection of Prussia being proved, accepted the advances of Austria, France's traditional enemy and England's former ally, who was at war with Prussia. When Choiseul was sent to Vienna in 1757 the new agreement had been signed, but he was never in entire sympathy with the Austrian Alliance.

In fact, Choiseul, though he believed a defensive alliance with Austria to be the right policy, in view of England's seduction of Prussia, did not approve of the terms of the new treaty.

What were Choiseul's recommendations for the important posts which he held at a very critical period in French history? Of high birth—he was descended from one of the ancient families of France, his branch being settled in Lorraine—with first rate military and some political training, and more than all by his mental power, character and temper, the Duke was bound to take a prominent place in the world's work of his time. At the age of nineteen—he was born June 28, 1719—Choiseul, then the Comte de Stainville, had accompanied Maria Theresa and her husband to Italy when the future Emperor of Austria took possession of the

Phases of France

Duchy of Tuscany. Then Choiseul became a soldier, first fighting with Austria against the Turks, and then with his own country against Austria in the War of the Austrian Succession. Next, after a life divided between his profession and days of pleasure in Paris, Choiseul, at the age of thirty-five, became ambassador to Rome—largely through the influence of Madame de Pompadour.

Choiseul's relations with the Marquise were not always so happy. At first he held aloof from the new "*maitresse en titre du Roi et du Royaume.*" The good understanding which finally prevailed between them was by reason of an important service which he did for her, though it was not undertaken with that object.

The further amorous intrigues with which Louis XV continued to occupy the greater part of his time were by no means unknown to Madame de Pompadour, but one came to her knowledge which threatened her position at Court. In 1751 she had arranged, much against Choiseul's will, a marriage between a relative of hers and one of his, the Comte de Choiseul-Romanet. She soon, however, began to regret the proposed match and to fear a rival in the lady. Free as was Choiseul in his private life, he was proud of his name, and, learning of the intrigue, he interfered in time to save that name from dishonour, to save her position for Madame de Pompadour, and to incur the resentment of the King. Madame de Pompadour, always keenly aware of the insecurity of her position, warmly expressed

The Duc de Choiseul

the gratitude she felt, Choiseul's aversion to her was overcome, they became the best of friends, and finally in a manner consolidated their interests.

The only minister who obtained any power over the favourite, he dominated her more and more to the end of her life. "He has an influence over the king which depends in no way upon the lady," wrote Stanley, the British peace envoy, to Pitt, June 8, 1761. "He has but little consideration for her, sometimes he appears brutal; when she wishes to speak of affairs, he replies that she is beautiful as an angel; the other day he told her to throw a *mémoire* into the fire."

Again, August 6, Stanley wrote on the same subject :

"Madame de Pompadour has ever been look'd upon, by all preceding courtiers and ministers, as their Tutelary Deity, under whose auspices only they could exist, and who was as much out of their reach as if She were of a superior class of Beings; But this minister (Duc de Choiseul) is so far from being under Subordination to Her Influence, that He seiz'd the first occasion to deprive Her not of an Equality, but of any Share of Power, reducing her to the necessity of applying to Him, even for those Favours, that She wants for Herself, and Her Dependents.

He has effected this great change, which every other man would have thought impossible in the interior of the Court, not by Plausibility, Flattery and Address; But, with a high hand, with frequent

Phases of France

Railleries, and Sarcasms, which would have ruined any other, and in short by a clear Superiority of Spirit and Resolution.”

Yet it was Madame de Pompadour who launched Choiseul on his political career. No post could be obtained without the King's consent, and Louis refused to affix his signature when the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saint-Contest, presented the Duke's name; it was the Marquise who finally persuaded him, and it was one result in regard to politics, at least, for which France had cause to be grateful to her.

After the Duke's appointment to the Embassy at Rome his chief diplomatic work was to procure the annulment of the famous Bull Unigenitus, the cause of so much cruelty and of so much strife in the Gallican Church. Socially, by his magnificent style of living at the Papal Court—a little copy of the state at Versailles—Choiseul upheld the traditions of the French Court when display occupied a large place in diplomacy, and the ascendancy which his wife, now just eighteen, was to acquire in the general society into which his position introduced her then became evident.

Thenceforth Choiseul's rise was rapid. In 1757 he received his appointment as ambassador to Vienna. It may have been that his early acquaintance with the Emperor and Empress determined the choice of his name for this important post. He was that as it may his powers were taxed to their utmost, for the fatal war was in progress. His military experience was brought into play, and he largely directed the operations of the allied armies during the year of his appointment. He also smoothed the path of Madame de Pompadour, serving as intermediary between her and Maria Theresa, who made politic advances to the delighted Marquise, and the no less gratified King, who,

Phases of France

seeing Choiseul's hand in it, was correspondingly grateful, also, to him. The term of service at Vienna was, however, short. The First Minister of the Crown, Bernis, already afraid of the results of the war, turned in his anxiety to the energetic young ambassador and, in the summer of 1758, proposed that he should share with him the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The King raised no difficulty and the same autumn Bernis, too anxious for peace to please Madame de Pompadour, was disgraced, and Choiseul was given his place.

Thus suddenly, after a short period of four years of preparation in the diplomatic service, Choiseul, at the age of thirty-nine, held the first position in the gift of the King. He had been created a Duke before leaving Vienna. Posts which brought rich rewards were now multiplied, and the King gave him a free hand in state affairs. In 1760 further honours and labours were heaped upon him. He was made Governor-General of Touraine and Superintendent of Posts and Relays and, in 1761, the Department of War was added to that of Foreign Affairs. Finally, in 1762, he took over the department of Marine. He was now the supreme head of affairs in France, as was Pitt in England.

Swift as had been his upward career, Choiseul was equal to his heavy tasks. The man of pleasure developed rapidly into the man of affairs, retaining for twelve years the favour of the King, together with an almost absolute power. His working day was never under eight, and was often ten, hours. In it

The Duc de Choiseul

he did an immense amount of work and gave evidence of remarkable qualities—a quick perception, an astonishing facility of work, and a gift of ready assimilation of numerous and complex facts.

To understand the task of Choiseul we must again glance at the general European situation and the diplomatic disposition of the Powers. At the beginning of 1755 France and Prussia were allies of long standing and opposed to England and Austria, likewise old allies. Austria, France's traditional enemy, had made attempts toward a better understanding with her as far back as after the peace of Belgrade, in 1739. Other overtures were made after the treaty of Dresden in 1745, on the marriage of the Dauphin with the Saxon princess in 1747, and again, after the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, when Kaunitz endeavoured to win over France from Prussia. None of these efforts were successful but, in 1756, it was made clear that Prussia had succeeded to England. Both countries were pledged to secrecy, but Austria, aware throughout of these secret negotiations, now produced proofs of Prussia's infidelity, and France united with Austria. The European concert against France then, which England had attempted, had rather turned against her and Prussia—for Russia was as much concerned as Austria at Prussia's aggressions. Frederick II, however, proved himself an unprecedented foe. England was ruled by the indomitable Pitt and, well supplied with men and with ships, the fortunes of war were favourable to his country in America,

Phases of France

India and on the sea. The defection of Russia on the death of Elizabeth and the accession of Peter III, was the final blow to the cause of the continental allies, and the ascendancy of Prussia over Austria, and of England on the seas, was assured.

But when Choiseul was called to power, in 1758, the *status quo* was still unchanged, England and Prussia were bent on aggrandisement, the other European Governments on preserving their territory—Austria, as well, on regaining Silesia. Choiseul saw clearly the dangers which threatened, especially the weakness of the Austrian alliance, and that it was only by means of an alliance between the maritime powers that France could hope to hold her own against England; that England on the sea was to be feared rather than Prussia in the centre of Europe. On the sea, France had everything to lose, on land nothing to gain. He “recognized that the chief enemy was England, and then as far as could be to direct the forces of the nation against her.”¹ Choiseul had, in fact, no sooner undertaken the direction of affairs than he began to act upon this idea, which recommended itself to his purpose from two points of view, and turned to Spain. She was a maritime power, and a Bourbon prince occupied the throne. A proposal, then, was made of a Family Alliance between the two maritime countries with the understanding that it should also include the other branches of the

¹ *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, Mahan, p. 330.

The Duc de Choiseul

house of Bourbon, and he afterwards proposed a maritime association in which he hoped to unite Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Russia.

These schemes came to naught, but Choiseul's combinations stood a greater chance of success than it is now, after succeeding events, easy to realize. If France was in an enfeebled condition, England was suffering from the long drain upon her resources. The price of gold increased daily and both England and Prussia felt the pinch of necessity. In spite of the hard times and the ruinous prices, the English cabinet was forced to buy gold, and Frederick issued a coin with a false value to tide over the emergency. Pitt, despotic and unyielding, as the war progressed and the English conquests alarmingly increased, began to arouse a feeling of terror in Europe something akin to that which Napoleon later excited. He was becoming the common enemy, and the fear of Austria gave place to fear of England. It was to combat her growing superiority that Choiseul gave all his thoughts.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details of the war, the questions of the separate peace, the *uti possidetis*, and the international difficulties with which Choiseul had to deal. It is sufficient to say that by the beginning of 1760 the respective allies disagreed regarding the continuance of the war. England, gaining fresh conquests with each battle, and Austria, dissatisfied, were still bent on war; France and Prussia wished for peace. "La

Phases of France

paix, c'est le cri de l'Europe, mais l'ambition est moins délicate," complained Frederick to the French ambassador at Malta. Had this been addressed to instead of at Pitt the implied reproach would not have in the least disturbed that minister's peace of mind. "If we could come to an understanding with England, the German quarrel would soon be settled," declared Choiseul, June 19, 1761, to Bussy, the French envoy to England. The wished for understanding was unlikely to come while Pitt was in power unless France should be brought so low that she could never rise again. Pitt did not consider that a victorious nation was under any moral obligation to make concessions to an enemy. "The guns have decided in our favour and we regard this decision as a sentence," he announced to Bussy. Choiseul, on his side, would not submit to peace at any price.

Quebec fell in September of 1759. In the same autumn the hastily formed French fleet, under sail to land invading armies in England and Scotland, was captured before it cleared the French coasts. Pondicherry was taken in January, 1761, and Belle-Isle, while peace negotiations were in progress, in June. But in the midst of these momentous events the death of George II (October 25, 1760) intervened, followed by the retirement of Pitt in October, 1761, though it was not until November 3, 1762, that the peace preliminaries were finally signed at Fontainebleau.

During the four years in which Choiseul had

The Duc de Choiseul

directed the policy of France her possessions in America and India had been lost, France herself successfully invaded. An ordinary man would have resigned office many times over, another man would have been forced to resign by pressure of public opinion. On the contrary, the confidence which Choiseul inspired in both the king and the people continually increased ; the cause of their calamities, they knew, lay in the mistakes and follies of others, past and present. Choiseul himself never for a moment thought of giving up the struggle. Within a few weeks of his appointment as supreme director of the French Executive, he wrote to his friend Count Bernstorff, the Danish ambassador, " I am determined to drop all negotiations for peace. Undeterred by the fear of misfortunes and confident in the strength and resources of my country I believe that by patience and firmness alone we shall bring our enemies to a reasonable attitude, and I should think the same even if we had lost Normandy and Brittany."

At the very time that Choiseul was suing for peace, his negotiations for an offensive and defensive alliance with Charles III of Spain, one of the cardinal points of his foreign policy, were being successfully concluded. He had also succeeded in arousing the patriotic spirit, which might well have been extinguished, and, aided by popular sentiment, heroic national efforts were made to strengthen the country's defences and to put it again on a war footing. In 1761 he gave over the Ministry of

Phases of France

Foreign Affairs to his cousin, the Duc de Choiseul-Praslin, in order to take up that of War, to which, in 1762, he added that of Marine, and he set to work to build up the navy, which had been practically annihilated. This work of reorganization, extending to every part of the public service, which was actively carried on by Choiseul to the end of his term of office, constituted, with the *Pacte de Famille*, which united the Bourbon crowns and changed again the political situation of Europe, his great achievements as minister.

With the Peace of Paris—February, 1762—the rôle of Choiseul as the ablest leader in the struggle against Great Britain and Pitt came to an end. Other aspects of his career remain to be noticed in order to complete the portrait of this historic figure. But first another person must be added to the picture—the Duchesse de Choiseul.

Beside birth, wealth, education, and innumerable friends, Choiseul possessed an incomparable wife. His marriage with Louise Honorine Crozat du Châtel took place in 1750. The bride, a child of fifteen, brought her husband a dowry of more than one hundred and twenty thousand livres a year.

It is difficult to give an idea of the regard with which the Duchesse de Choiseul inspired her contemporaries. A high value was not set on conjugal devotion at this epoch, but the Duchess united grace, charm and wit to virtue; heart and mind equally attracted. She was not wanting, either, in physical attractions and, though not strikingly beautiful, was much admired. "Her face is pretty, not very pretty; her person a little model," wrote Horace Walpole. The expression of countenance of such a character was sure to be its chief charm, and Walpole was certain to remark upon it: "with the happiest propriety of expression," was his verdict. "Nothing that I ever saw anywhere was like the Duchesse de Choiseul, who has more parts, reason and agreeableness than I have ever met in such a delicate little figure," he wrote to George Eliwyn. And he concludes the eulogium that she is "the most perfect being" he knew "of either

Phases of France

sex," and that she had "more sense and more virtues than almost any human being." In Madame du Deffand's correspondence with Walpole, the virtues of the Duchess, who, after him, was first in the heart of the blind old Marquise, were often the topic affectionately dwelt upon. "It is to be regretted that she is an angel," she wrote, "I would like it better were she a woman; but she has only virtues, not one weakness, not one fault."

From the time of her marriage the Duchess's chief ambition was to win the love of her husband, and one of the first means she sagaciously adopted was to improve her mind. She seems to have received less education than was usual even in those days, but the lack of it was more than made up to her by the devotion of a lifelong friend, the learned Abbé Barthélemy, who directed her maturer studies so efficiently that she eventually became one of the best informed women of her time.

The friendship which existed between the Duchess and the abbé is an example of similar platonic attachments in an extraordinary and contradictory age. He left his post—he was made Perpetual Secretary of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres in 1753—to follow her to Rome, and afterwards he accompanied the Duke and Duchess in their exile to Chanteloup. This learned and faithful companion was well loved, but the Duchess's affection for her husband was the absorbing passion of her life. When the Duke died, having not only spent his but her money, and leaving numerous

The Duc de Choiseul

debts, his wife undertook to pay them, depriving herself of all but the smallest means of subsistence.

Like other women of the age, the Duchess had imbibed philosophical principles and had no religious faith to sustain her in the evil times which befell her, beside the loss of husband and means, she had to pass through the Revolution. Rank, wealth, power, and the loss of them; admiration, neglect, good and bad fortune, left no visible trace upon this remarkable character except to strengthen it. In body she was weak, and sensitive nerves predisposed her to timidity and to depression of spirits, yet she invariably maintained a cheerful, modest and gentle, though firm, aspect. Courageous, indulgent, and thoughtful of others, her character may be summed up in the comprehensive word, unselfish. Such then was Choiseul's wife.

Of all the reforms for which the last half of the eighteenth century before the French Revolution is so remarkable in Europe, that of the suppression of the Jesuits, in which every Roman Catholic country took a hand, is the most surprising. The autocratic Order had made itself generally detested, and when Pombal audaciously started the movement against it in Portugal, the French Government was far from unsympathetic.

Choiseul has been given credit for initiating the French action, but though he marched decisively forward, once his mind was made up, he was not its instigator. Choiseul was no enemy to true religion, whatever the creed. When questioned as to his

Phases of France

own belief he was reserved and would not commit himself, but his moderation and liberality on this subject are undoubted. He persuaded the King to institute a new Order of Merit which was to be given to Protestants who distinguished themselves in the army. One part of his scheme for the creation of the city of Versoix, on the Swiss border, the success of which he had greatly at heart, was that of entire religious freedom, no disfavour to be shown any religion or sect. It was far from his intention to persecute any sect, but the Jesuits hastened their fall by attempting his. The Society had from the first been inimical to Choiseul, who had studied their constitution and methods at Rome, and, feeling themselves mistrusted, suspected and spied upon him. They feared his frank and open policy, so opposite to their own. They equally dreaded his jests and his sarcasms. The Dauphin was ruled by the Jesuits and both were intensely hostile to Madame de Pompadour and made every effort to annoy her and dispossess her. It was to her interests, therefore, to be rid of the Order. She always remained—though his scoffing wit did not spare her when she meddled in politics—on the best of terms with Choiseul, and in plotting the downfall of one that of the other was threatened. But notwithstanding that such plots would come to light, Choiseul, always indifferent to attack, and generally disdaining counter-thrusts, did not proceed against the Jesuits until they came in conflict with the Parlement. The hostilities then opened

The Duc de Choiseul

concluded with the suppression of the Order in France in November, 1764. Forcibly ejected by Portugal and Spain, Naples and Parma followed suit, and then Venice and Modena. Bavaria and even Austria supported the crusade against the unpopular Jesuits, and finally, on August 6, 1773, Pope Clement XIV was forced to abolish the Society by a decree which remained in effect until August 7, 1814, when it was revoked by Pius VII. These drastic measures against the Jesuits enacted by so many governments between 1758 and 1774 were part of a struggle directed toward the same object and inspired by the same requirement as the Associations Law enacted by the Republican government in France. That object was the necessity of subordinating Church to State, a policy which Choiseul was the first French statesman to adopt.

With many of his contemporaries Choiseul had close and interesting relations. One of the most important of these is that with Voltaire, who dedicated to him one of his pieces, one in which Madame de Pompadour figures, *Les Scythes*.

The year 1759 found Voltaire settled at Ferney and, apparently forgiving, if not forgetful of, past injuries, again in communication with Frederick, whose ambitious literary attempts he undertook once more to revise and correct. One day the post brought a packet from Potsdam that had been opened. It contained verses insulting to the French King's favourite. Terrified, Voltaire saw himself again under ban. Hastening to the French Resident at Geneva, he obtained and acted upon his advice, and sent to Choiseul Frederick's *Ode*. Thus began a correspondence which lasted twelve years between two men who, in their different ways, were as powerful and popular as any two personages in Europe. "Votre protecteur ou plutôt votre protégé," was the manner in which d'Alembert wrote of minister to writer. Choiseul granted many favours to Voltaire, in the first place reviving for him the franchises which Ferney formerly enjoyed. He became, too, a sympathetic coadjutor in Voltaire's altruistic crusades, himself supporting

The Duc de Choiseul

the unfortunate family of Calas until a pension was secured for them.

But the chief and the important part of their correspondence relates to the war with Russia. Choiseul had little reason to like Frederick II or his policy, but he feared any extension of Austrian influence. Circumstances had brought France to unite with Austria, but the minister, at all times conscious of the sacrifices required by this alliance, was ready to forward a political understanding with "Luc," as Frederick was termed by Voltaire, after his bad-tempered monkey. Their letters, until the close of the war, deal almost altogether with this subject, Voltaire enjoying the mingling of politics with literature, and feeling his importance still further enhanced by acting as intermediary between Choiseul and Frederick.

This triangular correspondence had its inconveniences for Voltaire. It was not pleasant, for instance, for Choiseul to hear, through St. Petersburg, that his letters had been forwarded to England, while both Frederick and Choiseul constantly charged Voltaire with indiscretions, and Voltaire, fearful of losing his illustrious patrons, through whose favour so many projects and protégés prospered, would make haste to confess, to deny, and to apologize.

In spite of Voltaire's righteous zeal as peacemaker the correspondence did nothing towards hastening peace, and it is now historically valuable only as illustrative of an historical phase, indicating

Phases of France

the undercurrents of the time, the underlying causes of the personal friction which kept so large a part of the world in commotion between 1755 and 1763.

The war closed, Voltaire put heart and soul into Choiseul's quixotic enterprise for Versoix.

At the beginning of 1768 Versoix was a quiet village only six kilometres from Ferney. Choiseul intended to transform the little place into an industrial city which should capture the commerce of Geneva, detested of Voltaire. In this new Utopia, freed from political dissensions, religious freedom also secured, where trade would be fostered, the working man, whose welfare was now Voltaire's chief interest, could live in comfort and in peace.

Versoix lay at the mouth of a small river which flowed into the Lake of Geneva, and a harbour which cost six hundred thousand francs was constructed. The fall of Choiseul, in 1770, caused the ruin of this project, which exhibited a social idealism illustrative of the finer qualities of the French noblesse on the eve of the Revolution. The port never harboured a merchant ship. The ideal city never arose behind the vacant port. But in the meantime Versoix formed the *raison d'être* for a continuance of an interesting correspondence.

Versoix for Voltaire was but a continuation of proletarian effort. Some years earlier—in 1765, to be exact—he had induced a colony of skilled Genevan workmen to settle at Ferney, and the

The Duc de Choiseul

support of powerful patrons was urgent. By means of their common friend, Madame du Deffand, he began a correspondence on this subject, so vital to him, with Madame de Choiseul. The wife of the first minister, she was an influential personage whose aid would be valuable, and she was gracious and charming withal, which, to a man of Voltaire's temperament, was no small attraction.

To draw attention and patronage to the workmen and manufactures of Ferney, Voltaire advertised them in odd ways. On one occasion the Duchess received a letter asking for one of her shoes. He could have a pair if he wished, she replied, suspecting some jest, and on receiving a second request for one shoe only—"Un seul, madame, un seul!"—he sent an enormous footgear, borrowed, probably, from one of her peasants. Shortly after the riddle was solved by the arrival of a pair of minute silk stockings with a letter filled, not only with her praises, but also with those of his wares:

"Deign to put them on, madame, only once . . . and if it is not said that my silk is stronger and more beautiful than that of Provence or of Italy I give up the trade; then give them to some one in your household, they will last a year."

The Duchess was useful, also, to the cunning philosopher in introducing his interdicted writings into France. How well pleased he must have been in sending to France these so feared and so guarded against writings under the protection of the First Minister and at the expense of the King.

Phases of France

We may be sure it was not the smallest of his satisfactions. In this manner Voltaire sent his brilliant productions in succession to Paris, to the no small pride and delight of the conniving Duchess, who read them aloud to a select and discreet circle in Madame du Deffand's salon, for Voltaire, ever imprudent, ever anticipated the heavy hand of the law, and asked for the exercise of discretion from the two ladies. Many characteristic lines were addressed to them; the following were written in response to their oft-repeated desire that they might converse with the author face to face:

“ Vous dont l'esprit et les bons mots,
L'imagination féconde,
La repartie et l'a-propos
Font toujours le charme du monde ;
Vous, ma brillante du Deffand,
Conversez dans votre retraite,
Vivez avec la ‘grand'maman,’
C'est pour vous que les dieux l'ont faite.
Si j'allais tres imprudemment
Troubler vos séances secrètes,
Que diriez-vous d'un chat-huant
Introduit entre deux fauvettes ? ”

The distinction of being enrolled among the Order of Capuchins, which occurred at this time, and which filled Voltaire with unholy joy, was due primarily to the “grand'maman”¹—that is, to Madame du Choiseul. In spite of his well-known views

¹ The youthful Duchess was called “grandmamma” in this intimate circle.

The Duc de Choiseul

regard to the Church, to monasteries and monks, Voltaire lived on excellent terms with the neighbouring Capuchins, so much so that in 1769 they applied to him for a large sum of money, a request which, strange as it may seem, was forthwith forwarded to the Royal treasury by favour of the Duchess. The money was obtained, and the head of the Order, full of gratitude, made their good friend an honorary member of the Society. It of course amused Voltaire to the last degree, and he did not fail to bestow his benediction right and left, even on the Cardinals with whom he corresponded. The affectionate intimacy between Voltaire and the Duke and Duchess was not destined to last, for in 1769 Madame du Barry was presented at Court, and the next year Choiseul was disgraced. Forthwith Voltaire took up his facile pen to shower praises upon the unworthy régime which succeeded that of his friend. It could not be said to be self-interest alone which prompted him. The downfall of the Parlement was ardently desired by the philosophers in general, and by Voltaire in particular, and it seemed to him that a government which had the mind and courage to undertake such policy was worth much, and he praised it accordingly. But though he was, after his usual fashion, usually ready with eulogies for the fallen minister, neither the Duke nor the Duchess could forgive conduct which they considered treacherous, and the letters, appealing, even pathetic, with which Voltaire inundated them remained unanswered.

Phases of France

Madame du Barry, like every one who came in contact with Choiseul, felt the force of his attraction and desired to live on the same amiable terms with him as had Madame de Pompadour. But, incited by his sister, clever and self-willed Madame de Gramont, who had no little influence over him, and who was at the head of the party determined to drive out Madame du Barry, he not only did not respond to her advances, but joined actively in the campaign directed against her. The year 1770 was one long struggle between the Duke and the new favourite. More than a struggle for power between persons, it was one between opposing elements in the State. Choiseul at this time represented the philosophical party and the Parliament; Madame du Barry the *parti devot*, or Church party. Apropos of the support of Madame du Barry by the Church, a story, which is a commentary on the moral standards and the character of the priesthood at the time, is related. One day, shortly before Madame du Barry was presented at Court, at a dinner where a large and distinguished company was assembled, a priest raised his glass and drank, "To the presentation." When asked by one of the uninitiated if it were to the Presentation of the Saviour at the Temple, he replied, "It is to the one about to take place, the presentation of the new Esther, who ought to replace Hamon and deliver the Jews from oppression." Hamon and Esther were Choiseul and Madame du Barry.

The King, vexed to see his courtiers for the

The Duc de Choiseul

most part follow Choiseul's unruly example, perceived, after many vain attempts to reconcile the two, that he must choose between minister and mistress—and Choiseul was dismissed. Nothing is so ephemeral as human passion. Even animosities disappear, and long afterward, when Louis XV had for some time been dead, Choiseul, returned from exile, and visiting Madame du Barry's neighbourhood, agreed to a proposal from his host to pay her a call. He was introduced under an assumed name, but she quickly recognized him and they had a friendly talk.

Choiseul was not easily scandalized, and had it not been for his sister he would probably have accommodated himself to the King's new fancy—for the benefit of the monarchy. Had he done so he would have kept his place, and the country would not have been robbed and ruined by Maupeou, Auguillon, and Terray.

After Louis XV dismissed Choiseul, and until the monarchy finally fell, France could not be said to have a definite foreign policy and, degenerate as the King was, and foolish as he had been in secretly thwarting Choiseul's measures, he frequently regretted him. "Ah! if Choiseul had been here," he exclaimed, when the news of the dismemberment of Poland reached France.

Choiseul's disgrace was not taken quietly by the public. He was ordered to leave Paris in twenty-four hours. The time was short but it was long enough for the news to circulate. The hand of

Phases of France

the latest favourite was perceived, and the Duke was made the object of a great popular demonstration, a precursor of those which marked the downfall in the next reign of the Monarchy. His portrait was everywhere displayed, medals were struck off, rhymes and epigrams were printed and repeated in the streets. One of them began :

“ Le bien-aimé de l'almanach
N'est pas le bien-aimé de France.”

Consternation was general. Choiseul's services were in every one's mouth, together with fears in regard to his successor in office. The order of exile required that the Duke should see no one. It was unheeded. The streets leading to his house were blocked with the carriages of his friends, who, headed by the Duc de Chartres, pushed aside the guards at the door and crowded about him to express their sympathy and their regret. They followed the fallen minister on his journey out of the city. The streets, the windows, the housetops were filled with cheering crowds. It was a triumph for the minister—a warning for the King.

As one knows, such triumphs are often short-lived. A public injustice, a wrong to the nation—such as the disgrace of Choiseul was felt to be—will arouse an emotional storm which may seem formidable ; but to-morrow a new excitement may arise, the fever subside, and the hero of a day be forgotten. It is this volatile character of popular outbursts on which governments rely to save

The Duc de Choiseul

themselves in such crises. But it was otherwise in the case of Choiseul. His popularity did not diminish during four years of exile, and the King had to endure the mortification of seeing the first and the most influential persons at Court and in the country absent themselves from Versailles to journey to Chanteloup, Choiseul's magnificent, most royal, residence at Touraine, to which he was banished. Confiscated during the Revolution, after passing through various occupancies and vicissitudes the château was finally demolished. An odd architectural toy, the many storied pagoda, built by the Duke after the plans of Le Camus, none remains, a landmark of his banishment in Touraine, still to be dimly descried from the banks of the Loire.

That his punishment was undergone in so pleasant a place was due to the Duchess. Even the careless king was not without thought for her. "But for Madame de Choiseul I should have sent her husband elsewhere," he wrote the Duc de la Vrillière, in whose hands he placed Choiseul's dismissal. For her part, the Duchess was not displeased to have her husband more to herself. Surrounded by those they loved best—even to the Duke's latest fancy—the recipients of numberless proofs of admiration and sympathy, they learned the value of disinterested friendship.

When we recall the brilliant company gathered in the salon at Chanteloup, the Duke—who had previously directed several ministries at once—seated

Phases of France

before his tapestry frame, entertaining with his genial wit such agreeable guests as the Prince and Princess de Beauveau; the reformed Maréchale de Luxembourg, dictatorial, but excellent company; that old courtier, the Duc de Gontaut, Choiseul's brother-in-law; and those true and tried friends the Chevalier de Chastellux and the Comte du Châtelet, the greater part of mankind would not have said that fate had been unkind. Influential public bodies supported the rival court at Chanteloup, and Church dignitaries—the Archbishop of Aix, the Archbishop of Orleans, the Bishop of Toulouse, and the Cardinal de Rohan, hastened to pay their respects to the fallen minister, the nation's idol. Some of the guests who prolonged their visits playfully called themselves the “Immovables,” while the Abbé Barthélemy made Chanteloup his home.

A life of pleasure alone, or a mentally inactive life, could not satisfy a man of Choiseul's energy and capacity, and he never gave up hope of reinstatement. On the accession of Louis XVI he was recalled to Paris, but not to power. Marie Antoinette did not forget that he arranged her marriage and attempted, though in vain, to influence in his favour the young King, who was afraid of Choiseul's bold, large political views. But the public demonstrations on Choiseul's return to the capital were no less extraordinary than they had been on his departure. The people threw flowers and verses into his carriage; princes of the blood, ambas-

The Duc de Choiseul

dors, the most illustrious in the land lost no time with their congratulations. The King's attitude alone was disappointing ; his disagreeable greeting, "You have grown fat ; you are getting bald," was not one to justify ambitious hopes.

Choiseul's personal extravagance was everywhere subject of remark. At Chanteloup he kept up a state which, after his remunerative posts were cancelled, was ruinous, and he was finally counselled by his friends to put aside a part of his wife's fortune, which was rapidly disappearing, so that it would be out of his reach. Nevertheless, his hotel in Paris was arranged on the same magnificent scale as Chanteloup. His table was open to all, and was divided in different apartments, that he might the more easily entertain guests of every degree. His house was a political and social centre, every evening but two out of the week a reception was held which included besides courtiers, magistrates, men of letters, and financiers. Shortly before ten an elaborate supper was served, from forty to sixty persons being present. The Duke had a list made up of those who had visited him in his exile, and orders were given that these were to be received at any hour and were always to be regarded as specially invited. In the midst of this extravagant and splendid life, the Duke was taken suddenly ill and died, aged sixty-six, on May 8, 1785.

Before summarizing the Duke's character and achievements as exhibiting a phase of France, a few further words must be given to the Duchess, the

Phases of France

suddenness and completeness of whose misfortunes make her history one of the most melancholy that is recorded of the time. Her character shines forth the brighter and clearer against the dark shadows cast by grief, care, privation, increasing ill-health and lonely old age, which were now her portion. "This woman, no bigger than a doll, has the courage of a lion," Madame du Deffand—whose death, in 1780, had deprived the Duchess of a well-loved friend—had once said, and fear she never felt, though she passed through the Terror. Her courage never faltered in the precarious situation in which she was placed after her husband's death, and alone she took upon herself the burden of his extravagant legacies and his enormous debts. She lived in the most humble manner, sometimes in a convent, sometimes in poor lodgings, keeping in touch with but few of her former companions. There was, however, one among them who now took a double pleasure in comforting her in her sorrows and difficulties, the good Abbé Barthélemy, old and infirm but who never omitted a daily visit to his Duchess.

Though the Revolution found her so changed in material circumstances, she still found ways in which to make herself beloved by the humbler folk about her. To such a degree was this true that, though her name and station were known, she was long left unmolested while her former friends were filling the prisons, or led to the guillotine. At length her turn arrived, and she was arrested and

The Duc de Choiseul

ent to prison. There she found herself among old companions and relatives. One after another they disappeared from view. It would seem that no phase of suffering was spared the gentle Duchess. The nearest relation she possessed was the Prince of Monaco. His wife was torn from her young children and taken away in the tumbril, and the Prince soon afterward died of grief. At length a resolution, signed by nearly every one of the poor persons of her quarter, was the means of the Duchess's release, after six months' detention, from prison. She emerged as placid, as smiling as she had entered. Her friends were now either dead or expatriated, and she lived on loans from one of her former peasants, still clinging to the idea of paying her husband's debts, hoping that the government would compensate her for what had been lost in the course of the Revolution. But it was not to be; she died December 3, 1808—24 Frimaire, An X—her last refuge a lodging in the rue de l'Université. She survived the Abbé Barthélemy by more than a year. Lacking the means almost to support life, the old Abbé supped with his friend one evening, the 6th Floréal. The next day he took to his bed, but though his state was seen to be critical, he refused to have the Duchess told of it. His last moments were spent, as befitted a scholar and the age, reading his Horace. The Duchess was inconsolable that he was not with him at the end. Few, indeed, can boast of such a friend as the Abbé Barthélemy.

Choiseul is an example of a type of the French noble immediately prior to the Revolution, and his life is part of the history of France. Extravagant and profligate in his private life, in the public service he was strict and economical. A patriot and a courtier, a statesman and a leader of society, an industrial worker and a man of pleasure, he was a product of his time. His many friends, the large sums he spent, suggest the epoch as well as the man. His ostentatious hospitality was open-handed; the flattery of men of letters did not spoil him, he was always ready to help them; he was kind to the poor. As a statesman he perceived the importance of sea power, and he saw where the strength of that power lay, and by uniting the forces of Spain with those of France he took the only means to counteract it. His policy was sound, but circumstances prevented it from being really tested. It was a policy intended to be permanent, with a permanent object, but the Revolution changed affairs in Europe before its full effect could be seen. Choiseul, foreseeing that the nation of the future was the commercial nation, was equally alive to the importance of colonial expansion. He firmly believed in his good star; perhaps he was too optimistic, for Versoix was not the only one of his schemes which

The Duc de Choiseul

ailed. He attempted to compensate for the loss of Canada by a settlement on the African coast, an undertaking which was not only a financial fiasco, but which resulted in distress and loss of life to large numbers of people.

Choiseul cannot be held responsible for the incapacity of his predecessors, or for the foolish and personally selfish policy of Louis XV which were the causes of the temporary collapse of France as a sea power. He repaired the disastrous effects of the Seven Years' War as far as any man could, and he made the policy of France respected abroad. His rapid methods of dealing with whatever he had in hand excited uneasiness in other countries. Catherine II called him the "cocher" of Europe, because he drove affairs at such a pace, and Frederick I complained that he was the most impatient man ever born in France. As must be true of all great men, Choiseul was in advance of his time. A despotic government, he clearly understood, was doomed in France, and he had an idea of provincial assemblies resembling the American State Legislatures. Modern in his diplomacy, his bold, straightforward procedure, his openness and frankness in negotiations aroused apprehension in his contemporaries at home as well as abroad. Modern, too, he was in his liberality and breadth of view on questions bearing on religion, believing, for instance, the final separation of State and Church to be inevitable and to be right. Displaying uncommon sense, and at a time when one might well be dis-

Phases of France

couraged, he never lost faith in the regenerative powers of his country, exercising a far sighted and patient, as well as an alert and vivacious intelligence for his country's good. As long as he was able he held back the Spanish King from declaring war, pointing out that peace was the best policy. Quick to perceive situations, energetic and enthusiastic but cautious and restrained, he was essentially a French type.

France has produced a race of men of rare capacity. The man who by his exertions in one direction advances the sum of human endeavour is not so uncommon, or so remarkable a work of nature, as he who has the power to turn at will from one line of pursuit to another. Of this national comprehensive mind the Duc de Choiseul was again an example. Choiseul had the good fortune not only to attract but to attach persons to him. He never really lost a friend; even Voltaire, of many friends, always remained inconsolable that he would not be reconciled. He possessed solid qualities which made him universally beloved and respected; in the height of his power he displayed no haughtiness or pride of place and, when reverses overtook him, his gay good humour never altered. The King asking how he made himself so much beloved, he replied: "*Ma recette est bien simple, elle consiste à aimer beaucoup moi-même.*" The proof of the wellnigh universal affection he inspired was shown after his disgrace, when he was more popular than before—Chanteloup more frequented than Versailles.

The Duc de Choiseul

Like generous souls the world over in all times, Choiseul did not know when to leave off giving. Burke ruined himself by keeping open house at Beaconsfield, William Pitt died in debt from the same sort of prodigality. Choiseul loved magnificence by nature, he also thought his rank and his position as minister demanded it; but the public funds never suffered diminution from this cause. He never asked anything from the King himself; the many favours he received were unsolicited.

Choiseul never harboured bitterness and injuries were soon forgotten. He followed the traditional policy of France in relation to England—the policy of Richelieu and Mazarin and of every administration up to that of the present Republic. This traditional antagonism between the two countries cannot be said to have entirely ceased until the advent of Edward VII to the throne of England. In the elasticity of their ideas, in the advancement of their civilization, France and England have always been in fact natural allies, and their close association is a state of things which, in the interest of the world, it is to be hoped always will continue. When Choiseul's patient endeavours were at length rewarded, and the Pacte de Famille, directed against English aggression, was signed, who could have divined that the two hostile nations would one day be united in a friendship cemented in the greatest war the world has ever seen?

The Duchesse du Maine : Her Court
and Political Intrigue

Chapter 3: *The Duchesse du Maine : Her Court and Political In- trigue. 1676-1753*

[N a review of phases of pre-Revolutionary France as illustrated by personal figures, we find one of which the Duchesse du Maine is a scintillating figure, the Queen of a Court in opposition to that of the Grand Monarque. She was, as well, the chief figure in a political conspiracy which aimed at the downfall of the Duc d'Orléans and at the rise of her husband, the Duc du Maine, and in aid of which the interference of Spain in French internal affairs was invoked.

By birth a Princess of the blood, Madame du Maine possessed a large share of the pride, courage and love of dominion of the royal house of which she was a member. But she was not a Princess and Bourbon merely. She represents the action of new forces on an old society, exhibiting in herself the complex effect of caste, feminine temperament, and intellectual revolution.

The politically aspiring Princess brought together a unique coterie which connects her name with celebrated and influential men and women of widely contrasted ideas. She forms a notable intermediary

Phases of France

between two contrasting epochs—the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Unmindful of obligation to her blood and rank, she attached herself to some who were leaders in the revolutionary ideas directed against royalty and her order, and she showed not a little liberality in regard to individual behaviour. It is pleasant, when accused of so much in the way of revolt, that there was no scandalous side to the private life of Madame du Maine, though she did not hesitate to make friends with such iconoclasts as Voltaire and the Marquise di Châtelet, Madame du Deffand and President Hénault, d'Alembert, and others wise and witty, but against whom much could be said by the adherents of established convention as well as by friends of the monarchical institution.

Born on November 8, 1676, Madame du Maine lived in a changing and a difficult period, and the struggle between the pride and prejudice of the old and the rash receptiveness of the new time was to some extent personified in her career.

The House of Bourbon and the French monarchy together reached their height in the reign of Louis XIV. In his latter days, true to the law of rise and decline which acts irrespective of persons or of their products, the man, the family and the monarchy began visibly to fail. It was then, when Madame de Maintenon was ruling supreme over King and Court, that Anne Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon-Condé, known up to her marriage with the Duc du Maine as Mademoiselle de Charolais, entered upon the scene.

The Duchesse du Maine

Signs of degeneracy were visible in the line of Bourbon-Condé in the person of the Princess's father, Henri Jules, Prince de Condé, son of the *grand Condé*. The line of Condé separated from the ruling branch with the father of Henri IV, the grandfather of Henri IV being the common ancestor both the Duc and the Duchesse du Maine. The main had deteriorated, but Mademoiselle de Charolais inherited her grandfather's type of mind and many of the characteristic qualities of that old noble descended to her—his energy and his love of battle, his appreciation of scholars and of scholarship. We are reminded of him in her political tergiversations; while from her grand-aunt, the daring Duchesse de Longueville, the Princess may have acquired a taste for political plotting.

In appearance she resembled her father who, like the ill-treated mother, Claire Clémence de Maillemezé, Richelieu's unfortunate niece, was under-estimated. Perhaps it was to distinguish him from the father, "le grand Condé," that his son was known as "le Prince tout court." His children were yet small in stature, and their grandfather, fearing that the race would entirely disappear, declared wittily: "If my race continues to diminish like this, it will come to nothing."

"The Royal dolls," was another of the descriptions to which the diminutive size of Mademoiselle de Charolais and her sisters gave rise.

It is true that Mademoiselle de Charolais was small in stature. Neither was she amiable in character,

Phases of France

but she was clever, and she had a lively and intelligent expression, and when she took the trouble she was able to please. In her rebellious small person was incarnated the restless spirit of the age. She craved continual excitement, a desire which, once her own mistress, her life was largely spent in satisfying.

Mademoiselle de Charolais was unhappy at home. Her father's tyranny was such that his wife and children led a wretched existence, victims of his uncontrolled temper which finally developed into madness. His docile German wife in her unhappy lot found what consolation she could in her children. Neither trouble nor money were spared in their education. Mademoiselle de Charolais, the third daughter, whose exceptional gifts were early recognized, was given the same tuition as her brother, and by no less a man than La Bruyère. That the young girl would submit to no such fate as that borne so uncomplainingly by her mother was soon evident, for she was as ungovernable and as despotic in temper as either her father or grandfather. Fortunately she was freed at an early age from the domestic thralldom to which the family was subjected by its head.

The Prince was not entirely devoid of the qualities of his race. He was a brave soldier, but his ambitions had now dwindled to those petty personal aims common to courtiers, and his only thought of a future for his children lay in the direction of the Court. Alliances, therefore, which would bring

The Duchesse du Maine

as near as might be to the throne were sought regardless of any stain on the escutcheon. His only son was married early to Mademoiselle de Nantes, the child of the King and Madame de Montespan, and now Mademoiselle de Charolais was betrothed, at the age of six, to the Comte de Vermandois, the son of the King and Madame de la Vallière. The premature death of the Count put an end to this arrangement, but six years later the Prince was betrothed by that most powerful of allies, Madame de Maintenon, to the realization of a similar arrangement with the Duc du Maine, the offspring also of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan.

Louis XIV was first attracted to Madame de Maintenon by her devotion to his children. Its sincerity was unquestionable and the feeling they inspired was the warmest passion she ever experienced. Among the sons the Duc de Maine was the one preferred by both, and the one whose equivocal position caused them the most concern. Madame de Maintenon, fearful of his future in the event of the King's death, was desirous above all things to see him established in a more assured position, and was seeking a bride with this object. Could there be a better alliance in such a case than that offered by a Princess of the blood, one which, by uniting two branches of the family, furnished scope for the most ambitious dreams?

The daughter of the Duc d'Orléans was first thought of, but Madame de Maintenon at once encountered the violent opposition of the King's

Phases of France

sister-in-law, the Princess Palatine, who, indeed, opposed any project brought forward by the King's favourite. She turned to the younger branch of the family and approached the Prince de Condé, where, one may be sure, her path was made smooth. She then persuaded the King—against his better judgment—that his children born out of wedlock might be placed on an equality with his legitimate offspring, and he himself visited the Princess to ask the hand of Mademoiselle de Charolais for the Duc du Maine.

The person or disposition of a marriageable Princess did not in those days much matter, and the three daughters of the House of Condé were most desirable from every other point of view. Nevertheless, the second daughter was now overlooked—she died from shame of it—because she was the tiniest even of the three. The eldest had already made a satisfactory marriage with her cousin, François Louis de Conti, and so to the third daughter, Mademoiselle de Charolais, fell the coveted bridegroom.

The wedding took place on March 19, 1692; the bride was sixteen, the bridegroom twenty-two. The marriage portion of each was princely. The young husband was the favourite child of the most powerful monarch in Christendom. All auguries seemed to promise security and happiness. But development of character can never with certainty be foretold, and Madame de Maintenon was given occasion—and soon—for disappointment in the bride she had chosen.

No husband and wife could be more unlike or less suited to one another than the Duc and the Duchesse du Maine. Piously reared by Madame de Maintenon, the Duke, easily led and well-mentioned, was a religious devotee; but there was neither emotion nor mysticism in the composition of the young Duchess, who, imbued with the new philosophical ideas, appeared to be drifting away from the practices of the Church. The attributes which were lacking in the wife, the husband possessed. In short, he had a heart, while she was gifted in head alone. As a child, the Duke had been weak of health but, thanks to the indefatigable care of Madame de Maintenon, he had developed into a healthy and pleasing, though timid and reserved, man, the very antithesis of his wife. One affinity there was, and one only, to draw the ill-assorted pair together—a common love of letters. Several works of the Duke, for the most part maxims religious and moral, show alike his literary leanings and the influence of Madame de Maintenon. The grief and chagrin of this lady will be understood when she saw that the doll was stuffed with lust—for so to her ascetic sensibility it must have seemed the want of piety in the young Duchess became daily more marked. In a letter to Madame

Phases of France

de Brinon, her assistant at Saint-Cyr, she complained that she had been deceived, naïvely remarking that she had provided the Duchess with a lady-in-waiting who was a perfect saint, a qualification which her mistress clearly did not appreciate.

In spite of disillusion, the Duke's fond friend was still ready and anxious to love his wife, as is proved when she writes : " the Duchess is beautiful, spirituelle, and, what is more important, she sincerely loves her husband, who on his side is passionately attached to her. I must say that I wish to love the Duchess being what she is to a man who is the treasure of my heart."

Unfortunately, as time went on there proved to be even less community of thought and feeling between the Duchess and Madame de Maintenon than between the Duchess and her husband. Madame du Maine was bent on pleasure to an inordinate degree, and were her freaks and fancies for a moment threatened, she would fly into such a passion that, mindful of the idiosyncrasies of her father, the Duke gave his wife her own way, no matter how much ridicule that way might call down upon both.

And other difficulties arose. The marriage, which had been celebrated with a splendour and display unusual even for princes, had aroused on either side of the family a jealousy which never ceased to exist and which was manifested in increasing ill-will. The Duchess was not one to be patient under any show of disdain or want of consideration.

The Duchesse du Maine

she resolved without delay to conquer a position which would place her above innuendoes in respect to her rank and rights. Ungovernable and uncontrollable, her unceasing complaints were finally heeded by the King, and a bill providing a degree between that of the peers and the legitimate Princes was passed by the parliament for their benefit.

The Duke was well pleased. Not so the Duchess, for no act would have satisfied short of one which would bestow the rights and honours possessed in full by the legitimate Princes. She did not hesitate to signify her discontent, abruptly absented herself from all Court functions, and immured herself in her private apartments.

This phase was short. Hardly the character to lead the life of a hermit, she soon turned to mad measures and then, one excess following another, to the most serious and arduous study, throwing into all that vehemence before given to amusement. Bruyère again became her guide, to whom was added the Duke's former preceptor, Malézieu. In her rooms were received other savants and men of letters, and this short interval, the prelude to the many distractions at Châtenay, Sceaux and Anet, was the period when, assisted by a remarkable memory, she gained her considerable knowledge of science and literature. But withdrawal from the world, and all that it might have signified, was of short duration.

The Duke's letters-patent, secured through his wife's efforts, were registered in the spring of 1694.

Phases of France

Before the year was out the Duchess, now more than ever impatient of surveillance and restraint, had persuaded her husband to forsake the royal roof and to take up their abode elsewhere. In the meantime her former giddy life had been resumed, and with increased extravagance.

Undue gaiety at the Court of Louis XIV under the strict discipline of Madame de Maintenon was not countenanced, and the Duchess's expenditure, which threatened to be ruinous, at last brought a warning from the King. To add to the Duke's discomfort, it was his misfortune to be continually reminded by his wife how much he had gained by his marriage with a Princess of the blood, and how much she had lost in allying herself with a man who had no claim to birth at all. Is it surprising that he found it convenient to absent himself, taking up his command on the frontier, a post for which, peaceable minded and studious, he had small natural inclination? In such manner were spent the first years of marriage.

No doubt the primal cause of the youthful Duchess's vagaries and waywardness was an incurable disappointment. It was only after marriage that she realized the true status of the illegitimate children of the King, and holding opposite views to her father, she henceforth looked upon her marriage as a *mésalliance*. Of harder fibre than her husband she no longer pretended to any respect for him and in after years showed few marks of tenderness for him or for their children.

The Duchesse du Maine

When, in the second year of their marriage, Madame de Montespan proposed to her son that he and his wife should occupy the château of Clagny, the magnificent residence at the gates of Versailles, built expressly for the favourite by the King, the Duchess was eager to seize the opportunity of freedom thus offered, and here, during the five following years, the ill-assorted pair nominally made their home and it was here the Duke suffered a painful shock, for the Duchess poorly requited the hospitality of Madame de Montespan. It was his strange fate to be the witness of his mother's final disgrace and banishment from her home, effected through the efforts of his wife, and of his oldest and his best friend, Madame de Maintenon. He now no longer cared to inhabit Clagny; his wife, too, was dissatisfied from its proximity to the Court, and in 1699 Sceaux was purchased. The next five years, while this grand domain was in course of transformation, were spent near Sceaux at Châtenay a house belonging to Malézieu. In this modest domicile, set in a hillside village prettily embowered in vines and fruit trees, Madame du Maine probably passed her happiest years.

Twelve kilomètres from Paris, Châtenay was so well removed from the Court, and here was found that which the Duchess needs must have—seclusion. Never before had she been so well satisfied with her lot, and the Duke enjoyed uninterrupted domestic tranquillity. At Châtenay their two sons were born.

Sceaux was purchased by the Duc du Maine in 1699, the year in which the Duchess paid her first visit to Châtenay; but it was not until 1704 that we find her, at the age of twenty-eight, installed in her own house, the first that she could call her own home. If we visit the site, though now largely despoiled and dismantled, the magnificent domain may yet, assisted by drawings of the period and by the facts which we know of its history, in a measure be reconstructed.

The barony of Sceaux covered a large extent of territory comprising also Châtenay, Plessis Piquet, and Châtillon. The palace, originally built in 1597 in the severely simple lines of seventeenth-century construction, had been altered and enlarged by Colbert, who made it one of the most splendid and ornate residences in France. Claude Perrault, the designer of the colonnade of the Louvre, oversaw its reconstruction, and Le Brun decorated the interior. Colbert, on the death of his eldest son, the Marquis de Seignelay, who had occupied it, was glad to find a purchaser in the Duc du Maine, and the new owner proceeded still further with improvements and embellishments. Le Nôtre had been the presiding genius at Sceaux, and the ornamental waters, the parterres and sculptures recalled his splendid

The Duchesse du Maine

ations at Versailles. Under the new châtelaine architects and painters were bidden to Sceaux, the statues were multiplied in the park, and an army of skilled workmen, the descendants of whom still live there, were drawn hither by the extent and importance of the changes involved. Madame du Maine inspired the last work of the painters Le Brun and Mignard, of the sculptor Coysevox, and other artists of the first half, the more restrained period, of the eighteenth century. She had no leanings towards the voluptuous; she would never have patronized a Boucher.

The preparations for their occupancy, which had called forth such vast expenditure of money, labour and brains, were at length completed, and the owners entered into possession.

It was a splendid home. A magnificent avenue, "La Diane," was an appropriate approach to the palace, before which it formed a half-circle. Terraces following the same curved line led to the park below, and the forest which then covered much of the country terminated the prospect. Another façade commanded a view, equally extensive, overlooking the fertile valley of Châtenay, where alone the winding waters of the Bièvre. The style of the period, when the intermingling of art and nature was utilized in producing grand effects, was throughout maintained. The main structure comprised five "pavillons" with ornamented façades and Mansard roofs, and set in an environment of brilliant towers arranged in symmetrical forms, of soft

Phases of France

verdure on which white marble gleamed, of falling cascades and plashing fountains, composed a scene which must have struck a spectator as the extreme of beauty and of grandeur.

The entrance to the principal court, or *Cour d'honneur*, which was preceded by another court, was reserved for the carriages of the King and the Princes of the blood, and the state and ceremony due to the position of the occupants of the palace were provided for in every particular.

In one of the gardens stood a building of elegant proportions and richly decorated in the classical style, the Pavillon de l'Aurore, so called from a fresco by Le Brun which ornamented the ceiling of the cupola. This was Madame du Maine's pleasure-house, the appropriate theatre for the allegorical fêtes of which she was so deeply enamoured.

“ Malgré ma superbe structure,
Le temps, tyran de la nature,
Ebranlera mes fondements ;
Mais ma mémoire, consacrée
Par vos nobles amusements,
Sera d'éternelle durée.”

This prophecy relative to the Pavillon de l'Aurore, made by Malézieu, has not yet been fulfilled. The Revolution left it intact, and though its beautiful carved wood was destroyed by the vandalism of the Prussians in the war of 1870, the pavilion may yet be seen, still adorned by Le Brun's charming fresco.

The so-called Court of Sceaux combined the personnel and occupations common to a Court with

The Duchesse du Maine

ose proper to a literary society. It existed throughout the first half of the century for the long period of fifty years. This period may be divided into two parts : the first, that before the arrest and imprisonment of Monsieur and Madame du Maine on December 29, 1718; the second, from which politics were eliminated, and when old friends were to some extent superseded by new, having still a little in common with the first.

Throughout the first part the predominant figure in the scene is Nicholas de Malézieu, whose name is now less often heard than those of others who in that day had less reputation. A member of the French Academy and of the Academy of Sciences, vivacious and bel esprit, he was a man of the happiest disposition and of many friends ; he, and he alone, it was said, was able to bring about a reconciliation between Fénelon and Bossuet. For more than twenty-five years Malézieu was at hand to supply Madame du Maine with that endless procession of changing amusements and intellectual pursuits demanded by her, and it was Malézieu she had chiefly to thank for the éclat her Court enjoyed. That the great households of the period found it pleasant and useful to have beaux esprits attached to them may be readily perceived, but it is less easy to understand how such an occupation could be congenial to a scholar. We have to recollect that the eighteenth century was a period which, in its vivid contrasts and in its extremes, both good and bad, has no counterpart in history, and that it

Phases of France

provides many instances of similar devotion between clever men and women. Who can forget the well-known affectionate relations which existed between Madame du Deffand and Horace Walpole, so many years her junior, and again, in the close and long intercourse between Malézieu and Madame du Maine may be seen at work that spirit peculiar to the time, which drew men and women familiarly together intellectually in platonic friendships. The lasting and helpful nature of this social feature of the eighteenth century is thrown into stronger relief by the light and ephemeral character of the love-making of the time in this circle of society, but—and this should be emphasized—in this circle alone.

As Malézieu had assisted in Madame du Maine's intellectual development, he looked upon her attainments, no doubt, as primarily his own product, and upon her and her career with the sympathy and interest natural to the master who sees his pupil respond to his efforts.

As to her husband, his piteous plight anticipated that of another unfortunate husband of a well known ruler of a later salon, Madame Geoffrin, of whom a constant visitor, pointing out Monsieur Geoffrin, inquired his name.

Possessed of such an amenable husband and such a capable friend, even the disappointed and egotistical Duchess, one might think, could now have congratulated herself as being a woman favoured of fortune. But circumstances do not alter the nature of individuals. With a brilliant intellect, this singular woman had none of the strength and solidity of mind which tends to create serenity of spirit. She did not love study for its own sake. To be diverted was her aim, and the diversions required by her must be at once amusing and clever. Malézieu, hard pressed, sought a coadjutor among his academical confrères to assist him in this double task and, strange as it may seem, the Church produced the Court jester.

The Abbé Genest, ex-chaplain of the Duchesse d'Orléans, was one among the large number of those accomplished and epicurean abbés who flourished in this period. He mingled much learning with little piety, living a life of pleasure. Many and witty were the couplets improvised by him for

Phases of France

Madame du Maine and her company, and his success was instantaneous. The abbé was the fortunate possessor of a prominent nose—fortunate as it gave opportunity to the Duchess to play upon his name, which was immediately changed from Genest to Large Nez. Anything but sensitive, such a man furnished a mark for her mordant wit, and between Large Nez and Malézieu not a dull moment was suffered at Châtenay.

Novel amusements were constantly in course of preparation by the indefatigable pair. Marvellous fireworks were invented, and the enchanted villagers, in the happy fashion of pre-Revolutionary days, joined the gentry in rustic dances, and before these simple pastimes were permitted to pall entertainments on a magnificent scale were organized. Of one of these, given on August 16, 1704, we have a detailed description.

The chief feature was a play written by Madame du Maine expressly for Malézieu, who took the leading part. The prologue was by Genest. The music for the ballet which accompanied the play, composed by Matho, the Court musician at Versailles, was performed by an orchestra of thirty-five pieces. The villagers had appropriate parts, and the piece was given in a tent which seated more than three hundred spectators. After the play the company supped and danced till daylight.

We read, too, of an extraordinary scene when a collation presided over by the Duchess was prepared in a hall lined with fresh foliage to simulate a wood-

The Duchesse du Maine

nd scene, and when the serving men were disguised
fauns.

All mythology was ransacked for subjects for
these splendid festivals, and the occupants of
Château de Châteaufort, as it were by the wave of a wand, were
changed into dryads and divinities, nymphs and
gnomes, tiniest elves and gigantic Cyclops. Out of
compliment to the châtelaine's scientific acquirements
the place was peopled also with a multitude of
astronomical figures and constellations, and single
celestial bodies revolved about the small, yet com-
manding, figure of her who, to them, represented
the pole star, the centre of their universe.

As many ridiculous devices of divers sorts as a
very fancy could conceive were employed to gratify
that love of amusement which must be satisfied at
any cost. On one occasion animated ninepins
stood in ranks, or toppled over at will. Another
evening, when cards were played, the players were
dressed as figures on cards, such as the Queen of
Hearts, the King of Clubs, or Knave of Spades.
The success of each and every fantasy was assured
by the presence of the best dancers of the Royal
Academy, while recitations in verse, after the manner
of the following composition by the hostess, gave a
literary and classical turn to the entire conception—

“Avec sa lyre,
Quand Nevers¹ chante dans nos bois,
Il n'est point de cœurs qu'il n'attire,
Comme fit Orphée autrefois,
Avec sa lyre.”

¹ The Duc de Nevers.

Phases of France

It was at Châtenay that Madame du Maine evolved the much talked of and imitated institution—a mock pattern of the chivalric medieval Orders of Chivalry—the Order of the *Mouche à Miel*. The Order and the name had their origin in the appropriate device taken by the Duchess before she left Versailles, a bee, encircled by the line from Tasso, “I am little, yes, but I leave a cruel sting.” A warning to be heeded, as advised by Malézieu in the following stanza :

“ L’abeille, petit animal,
Fait de grandes blessures,
Craignez son aiguillon fatal,
Évitez ses piqures.
Fuyez, si vous pouvez, les traits
Qui partent de sa bouche ;
Elle pique et s’envole après ;
C’est une fine mouche.”

Ludovise, the name adopted by the Duchess as Queen of the Bees, presided over the meetings of the Order, a golden wand in hand and seated on a throne hung with blue velvet embroidered in silver bees. At the ceremony of initiation the novice swore fidelity not only to the Order and its members, but to the pursuit of pleasure, and as many impossible questions as could be invented were asked to embarrass him and to amuse his tormentors. At the end the new member was invested with a gold medal bearing the likeness of the Queen.

Of the women whom we meet at Sceaux, none is more remarkable than Rose de Launay, afterwards Madame de Staal, the accomplished companion and confidante, an interesting and often pathetic figure, a contrast to her wilful and imperious mistress. Her lifelong service with Madame du Maine begun in the humble capacity of *groomme de chambre*, and her *Mémoires*, frank in regard to the exigent character of her mistress, yet bear witness to a considerable patience and consideration for that mistress' part. A knowledge of science and literature had not equipped the young woman for the position to which she was at first assigned and, very shortsighted, many awkward and ridiculous mishaps occurred on the performance of her duties. To Rose de Launay was due much of the success of the entertainments at Sceaux. A personal attendant only on Madame du Maine, her talents for some time lay hid, and she only emerged from this unsuitable position by the ingenious expedient of leaving about the rooms witty verses and letters, the author of which in such a company of *bels esprits* could only to be known to be appreciated.

“ L'auteur que vous cherchez n'habite point les cieux.
 Fixez donc à vos pieds vos regards curieux.
 Alors, à la clarté d'une faible lumière,
 Vous le découvrirez, gisant dans la poussière ! ”

Phases of France

Appearing when curiosity had been excited to its highest pitch, the lines gave a hint as to the quarter where the writer might be found and, once discovered, her right to be one of the company was immediately recognized. For in no society was intelligence worth so much to its possessor as in that of France in the eighteenth century. As a caste the aristocracy had degenerated ; as individuals they were dominated more and more by the intellectuals.

Rose de Launay, afterwards Madame de Staal, must not be confounded with Madame de Staël, Necker's daughter. She was properly Marguerite Cordier, the daughter of a poor painter but, dissatisfied with her obscure origin, she took her mother's name, Rose Delaunay, changing Delaunay into de Launay. Notwithstanding this courageous, if reprehensible, initiative, the story of her life reads more like that of sensitive and impressionable Julie de Lespinasse than that of forcible and masculine Germaine Necker. Of the same emotional temperament and delicacy of constitution as Julie de Lespinasse, Rose, also, encountered more than one unhappy love episode and, like her, her health was impaired by the nightly vigils imposed by Madame du Maine who, like Madame du Deffand, Julie's mistress, was afflicted with insomnia. Unlike Julie, Rose married ; but marriage brought no release ; she never was freed from her thralldom, remaining under the lifelong yoke of the exacting Duchess. Rose was twenty-seven when she entered Madame

The Duchesse du Maine

Maine's service, and she died, still in her service, fifty-three. Like Julie de Lespinasse again, though unhappy in love, she had the affection of many and the admiration of all. Vertot, Chaulieu, Saint-Pierre and Fontenelle were her devoted friends, and were glad to be received in her comfortable room, which had neither fireplace nor window but which was brightened and warmed by her presence. The small chamber was the meeting-place where the proposals and plans for the *Grands vits* were developed. Sometimes she escaped to Paris, where she was made welcome at the Temple, and—by way of contrast—at the recherché gatherings of the Hôtel de Lambert. Her *Mémoires* have the ease and the naturalness of a well written story. The incidents are few, the persons about her being slightly sketched, but like Julie de Lespinasse again, as a piece of subjective writing, a study of her own emotions, the *Mémoires* of Madame de Staël, though more restrained than are the outpourings of Julie's heart and mind, are remarkable. Her agreeable comedies, *L'Engouement* and *La décade*, by Madame de Staël, were successfully produced at Sceaux.

The efforts at self-control at length exerted by Madame du Maine were not in the least strivings for sanctity; they were but the more intelligent exercise of a strong will, of determination to satisfy her ambition with which she was consumed. She enthroned in her kingdom of Sceaux no time was lost, no pains were spared, in developing the

Phases of France

idea which had germinated at Versailles when, dissatisfied with the position there accorded her, her attendance at Court abruptly ceased and she shut herself in with scholars, the idea which dominated the fêtes at Châtenay, and for which the possession of Sceaux gave more scope. The idée fixe of which she was possessed, one of self-aggrandisement solely, was no less than herself to hold a Court which should vie with that of Versailles in power and in influence. It may seem equally strange that her ambition was here gratified. The great world pressed to be admitted in larger numbers to Sceaux, where gaiety and wit were the rule, than to Versailles which, in conformity with the opinions of Madame de Maintenon, exhibited a sober and stiff propriety ill calculated to please courtiers.

It was a great triumph to outnumber and outshine the Court of the most powerful monarch in Christendom, even in its decline. By what means had Ludovise, even with her enchantments, been able to encompass this her heart's desire?

Madame du Maine attained power through the tact she displayed in the choice of her society. She had the insight to call to her side not only the great by right of birth but the great by virtue of intellect. Genest was established in the neighbourhood; and Malézieu came to live at Sceaux. Thus, by visible bonds, she securely attached this necessary friend to her service. Other savants and men of letters were attracted to Sceaux,

The Duchesse du Maine

ured by the seductions of flattery, good living, and of the mental stimulus which comes from the encounter of alert minds.

The tragic poet, Lagrange-Chancel, the pupil of Racine, "un petit monstre, mais plein d'esprit," according to Duclos, was introduced to Sceaux by Malézieu, again seeking assistance in his multi-term tasks for one who not only wanted amusement but exacted that "la joie eût de l'esprit." Once stalled at Sceaux, there the author remained until he wrote himself and his friends into prison and exile.

A second associate who eventually suffered disaffection with his hosts was the polished and accomplished Cardinal de Polignac, diplomat, orator and Latin poet, who was accused of too great fondness for his Duchess.

"Que des savants a passé l'espérance,
Que les soutient qui les anime tous,
Que les éclaire, et qui règne sur nous
Par les attraits de sa douce éloquence ;
Ce cardinal qui sur un nouveau ton
En vers latins fait la sagesse,
Réunissant Virgile avec Platon,
Vengeur du ciel, et vainqueur de Lucrèce." ¹

So Voltaire describes "le cardinal oracle de la France" in the *Temple du Goût*, which contains a series of "portraits" of the society of Sceaux. Among the more important of those who com-

Le Temple du Goût. Œuvres complètes de Voltaire. Paris, Fournier Frères, 1877.

Phases of France

posed the Court of Sceaux in its earlier period was Fontenelle. The "parent d'esprit," as Fontenelle is styled by Voltaire, had a quite different order of intellect from that of his uncle, Corneille. Prudent and discreet, yet brilliantly original and versatile, Fontenelle was never tragic. The chief prop and stay of many successive salons, it was at Sceaux, where the grand air of the Court of Louis XIV and the intellectual impetus of the Hôtel de Rambouillet were found mingled with and enlivened by the more sparkling wit of a more flexible period and with the modern movement of thought of which he was an apostle, that Fontenelle felt most at home.

"C'était le discret Fontenelle,
Qui, par les beaux-arts entouré,
Répandait sur eux, a son grè,
Une clarté douce et nouvelle.

Avec Mairan il raisonnait ;
D'une main légère il prenait
Le compas, la plume, et la lyre."

Mairan—associated in these lines from the *Temple du Goût* with Fontenelle, whom he succeeded as perpetual secretary of the French Academy—was another of those with no patent of nobility but in the front rank of scholarship who frequented Sceaux at this time. An assiduous habitué was the sharp-sighted Abbé Mongault who, when asked the nature of the "vapours" with which he was afflicted, demurely replied : "It is a terrible malady ; it makes one see things as they are !" The law

The Duchesse du Maine

as represented by two magistrates, each of whom was marked out for special favour by Madame du Maine; famous for his suppers and his chronology, president Hénault, whose *Abrégé Chronologique* had established his reputation as an historian, did not disdain to write vers de société for the Duchess, who in return called him familiarly her “president ordinaire”; the other, the agreeable first President of the Parlement, de Mesmes, she lost the moment he had to make his choice between her and the Regent. The Abbé Chaulieu passed months at a time at Sceaux. In love with every pretty woman, Rose de Launay kindled the last flame in his breast and inspired his muse when he was nearly eighty.

Amid these, her choicest spirits, Madame du Maine reserved a quite special warmth of feeling for the Marquis de Sainte-Aulaire, the old gentleman whom she tenderly addressed as "son berger," whilst she, to him, was likewise "sa bergère." Whatever relates to Sainte-Aulaire, as to Fontenelle, excites our interest. Like Fontenelle he lived to a great age with an equal enjoyment of life, maintaining his intellectual vigour unimpaired. He proves that youth is after all not indispensable for the poet, for he did not begin to write until the age of sixty, and his verse secured his admission to the French Academy. The credentials he brought were by report no more than a verse addressed to Madame du Maine. Boileau expostulated, and he was not alone. "What! for four lines?" cried Thomas Corneille, scandalized. "Five," replied Cardinal de Rohan, and he repeated by heart the play on words improvised by the Marquis when teased by the Duchess on his ignorance of the Cartesian school of philosophy—a production characteristic of the society of Sceaux :

"Bergère, détachons-nous
De Newton, de Descartes,
Ces deux especes de fous
N'ont jamais vu le dessous
Des cartes, des cartes."

The Duchesse du Maine

Sainte-Aulaire was never at a loss to answer a question. When the Duchess demanded: "What the difference between me and a clock?"

"The clock marks the hours, whilst your serene highness makes one forget them," was the ready reply of the old courtier.

"L'aisé, le tendre Sainte-Aulaire,
Plus vieux encor qu'Anacréon,
Avait une voix plus légère ;
On voyait les fleurs de Cythère
Et celles du Sacré Vallon
Ormer sa tête octogénaire."¹

This summarizes the art of the charming octogenarian poet, who strove with Polignac for the Duchess' affections.

Voltaire was among the number of those for whom the hospitable gates of Sceaux swung wide. Sceaux received Voltaire in 1714, when he was but a boy of twenty. His audacity and his genius were already, wherever he went, making him friends and foes, according to his humour and their indulgence. A listener to some verses by the Prince de Conti, which the Prince himself read to Madame du Maine, the young Arouet remarked: "Monseigneur, you will be a great poet. I must see that the King gives you a pension." Such speeches would have got him into trouble, but in spite of, perhaps because of, his impertinence Voltaire succeeded in pleasing Madame du Maine who, in fact, launched him on his career. It was understood that Sceaux should be a refuge to him

¹ Voltaire. *Temple du Goût.*

Phases of France

and his is one of the eminent names with which hers is helpfully connected.

The first among the grands seigneurs to take the lead at Sceaux was Madame du Maine's brother, Louis III, Duc de Condé. Brother and sister were much alike, for the Duke plumed himself upon being a *bel esprit*. Saint-Maur, the Duke's country seat, was near, and there was a constant exchange of visits, and when apart, of verses, in which they were assisted by their respective official wits, Chauvieu at Saint-Maur, and Genest at Sceaux. Beside this brother—whom she lost in 1710—among the great nobles whose names we find most frequently mentioned are the old but pleasure-loving Duc de Nevers; the Duke of Albemarle, natural son of James II; the Duc de la Fare and the Duc de Coislin, the Comte d'Harcourt and the Comte de Dampierre. Among the great ladies who served as a bright background to the intellectually eminent in the fêtes of Sceaux—such as Rose de Launay—were the Duchess' cousin, the beautiful “Diane,” the Duchesse de Nevers, and her daughter, the Duchesse d'Estrées—both, we are told, very fond of eating.

It was in 1714, when Madame du Maine's Court had arrived at the zenith of its glory, that it appeared for a moment as if it were stricken with a sudden decline, the muses and graces seemed to languish, and pleasure to pall. The Duchess suffered from sleeplessness which Rose in vain attempted to assuage by reading aloud. At this critical juncture the “birds of Sceaux,” as Madame du Maine's

The Duchesse du Maine

habitués called themselves, came to her succour, and the "Grandes Nuits," when the entire night was passed in revelry, were instituted. This special idiosyncrasy lasted about a year and was celebrated once a fortnight, some time being necessary for the preparation of the entertainment, which became on each occasion more elaborate. A different group for each evening undertook the management and, the Duke protesting at the expense, the participants took it upon themselves, and made themselves available for the ballet brought from the Opera at Paris, and similar dear delights. The "Grandes Nuits" of Sceaux have a place in the history of the extravagant pleasures of the times beside the fetes at L'Isle-Adam, Chantilly, Berny, the Temple, and the suppers at the Palais Royal, but with this difference, that at Sceaux the gaiety, if more extravagant, was more decorous.

It was indeed a unique and an extraordinary society which I have sketched; never has there been an equal combination of men of such varied talents and condition gathered in a palatial country residence round a young, ambitious and clever woman of the highest rank. It was by force of will, and by an appreciation of the elements, intellectual and social, which were at the time calculated to impress her world, that the Duchesse du Maine created her Court at Sceaux, one of the most significant and notable illustrations of the social and intellectual tendencies at work in the French aristocracy in the age which preceded the Revolution.

Before the later phases of her Court are described Madame du Maine must be seen in the rôle of a political conspirator. She had succeeded as a leader in the social and intellectual society of Paris; the Court of Sceaux rivalled that of Versailles. But this did not suffice to satisfy her proud spirit, and there is little doubt that in the midst of her festivities her mind was busy with schemes of a political character. She aimed at political as well as social power and, far from being content with her kingdom of Sceaux, she went so far as to dream of herself as Queen of France.

Determined and clever as well as successful in the attainment of those objects which she set herself to secure, they had been purely social aims. She was without either political knowledge or political capacity, and her ambitious attempts to influence the course of politics as she had influenced the society of Paris ended in a fiasco. Her position as a Princess of the blood and the wife of Louis XIV's favourite child gave the episode a notoriety which could not at the time be overlooked. Its result, disastrous to herself, her husband and the friends who supported her, was to strengthen the position of the Regent by providing a pretext to put aside for ever a possible rival in her husband.

The Duchesse du Maine

The conspiracy of Cellamare in which the Duchess was the central figure, culminated in 1718, the year after the signature of the Triple Alliance between France, England and Holland. From the time of the death of Louis XIV, in 1715, his grandson, Philippe V of Spain, had sought by intrigues to overthrow the Regency of the Duc d'Orléans, and he found in the Duchesse du Maine an ardent coadjutor. The conclusion of the Quadruple Alliance—August 2, 1718—in which the German Emperor, Charles VI, joined the signatories of the Triple Alliance, and which was aimed directly at Spain, brought the affair to a head. At some earlier incidents should be recalled to appreciate the position of Madame du Maine.

As has been previously stated, her unceasing complaints at the equivocal status of the Duc du Maine at length drew from Louis XIV a new degree of the monarchial hierarchy, one expressly created for the Duc du Maine and his younger brother, the Comte de Toulouse. This edict—registered at the Parlement in 1694—procured the two brothers the privileges of a rank above that of the dukes and peers, but below that of the Princes of the blood. From that time the bastards gradually assumed most of the visible privileges of the legitimate Princes.

As his life neared its end Louis XIV showed an increased—and in the opinion of many of his subjects, a foolish—affection for his illegitimate children. As his lawful heirs died one by one, his interest

Phases of France

in them, not least in the Duc du Maine, seemed to grow, and the legitimatized Princes, with other aspirants, began to entertain designs on the Crown which were made possible by the startling deaths in rapid succession of the Dauphin and his sons. Only one and that one a weakly child of five, remained of the direct line. After this child the King's nephew, the Duc d'Orléans, was the lawful heir to the Crown, but Louis' grandson, Philippe V of Spain, though disbarred by the Treaty of Utrecht, put forward a claim that in the event of the King's death he would be entitled to the Regency during the young King's minority and, in the event of this Prince's death without issue, that he would be the rightful heir to the French Crown, as in the direct line. In this he was supported by general opinion in France. The bastard brothers were now added to these more or less lawful claimants of rights to the Regency and to the Crown, and if the Duc du Maine was wanting in courage to support these pretensions, both his wife and Madame du Maintenon were ready and anxious to maintain them.

After the death of the Duc de Berry, his third and last surviving grandson, in 1714, Louis XIV, on July 14, issued the memorable edict by which the legitimatized Princes were accorded not only the rank, honours and precedence enjoyed by the legitimate Princes, but which also, in case of the death of the young Louis, placed Maine and Toulouse and their descendants next in order of

The Duchesse du Maine

cession—the rights of the Duc d'Orléans being overlooked.

The death of Louis XIV occurred on September 1715. It is common knowledge how his will was set aside and the Council of Regency turned into a subsidiary body. Orléans was now the ruler of France.

In spite of provocation, Orléans bore no malice against the legitimatized Princes. Under the suspicion of having poisoned the Dauphin and his sons, he might well have felt his honour involved in the person of the young King being relegated to another, and yet Maine remained guardian of the King, though deprived of any authority over the royal household or the household guards. These were in the hands of the young Duc de Bourbon, the nephew of Madame du Maine, who now declared against the new prerogatives. The indignation of Madame du Maine against her nephew was violent and a family quarrel was the result.

Orléans was willing to believe that it was only natural for Maine and Toulouse to wish to secure for good a position for themselves as they could. So, he was their brother-in-law and he did not wish to despoil them of their privileges any more than was necessary.

His most influential advisers thought differently. His mother, energetic Elizabeth Charlotte, the Matine Princess, vehemently opposed the brothers, more, perhaps, to be in opposition with Madame Maintenon, than because she feared for her son's

Phases of France

supremacy. Saint-Simon, bitterly prejudiced against the bastards, was at the head of the opposition of the dukes and peers, and d'Argenson, lieutenant of police and afterwards Garde des Sceaux, assured the Regent that a poignard was pointed at his heart as long as the Duc du Maine had the shadow of a claim to the throne.

The family feud, meanwhile, dragged on in procès and counter procès for the next two years, the Duchess supported by the remnants of the old Court party and disaffected nobles, while the dukes and peers sustained the cause of the Princes of the blood—actually aided by the machinations of the Duchesse du Maine. Finally, at the bed of justice which was held on August 16, 1718, the education of the King was taken from Maine as well as his rank and prerogatives as a Prince of the blood—the privileges of the Comte de Toulouse at the same time, who happily for himself had no wife to plot on his behalf, being assured to him during his lifetime.

Orléans was the most capable of the French Princes. He had the sagacity to perceive that England would in the future be a valuable ally, and he thought less than did Louis XIV of Bourbon alliances. Such a state of affairs and such forces at work—a policy at once new and anti-dynastic in its tendencies, disappointed ambition, a considerable resentment among some of the nobles, the possibilities of power—all these produced a situation which well might drive a restless and dissatisfied woman with a high opinion of her own capacity,

The Duchesse du Maine

the Duchesse du Maine, into an intrigue on behalf of her husband with a foreign Power in the position of Spain.

Cellamare, the ambassador of Spain in Paris, who had lived in the French capital since 1715, a man whose action was a measure of his credulity and incapacity, may be regarded as the chief actor in this intrigue, though he was in fact no more than the agent of his chief, Alberoni.

The primary object of the conspirators was to depose the Regent and to take possession of the person of the King. In other words, to make the King of Spain master of France, with Maine as his deputy. The Duchess could well dream that she might indeed be a veritable Queen.

The Château de Sceaux was the centre from which radiated the active discontent against Orléans, where all complaints were received, whence flowed pamphlets and satires. Of these Lagrange-Chancel was the most notorious producer. Orléans was compared to Nero and Sardanapalus.

“Rocher des ondes infernales,
Prépare-toi, sans t’effrayer,
A passer les ombres royales
Que Philippe va t’envoyer.”

Maillet, thrown into the Bastille on a charge of sedition, was hardly discharged before he was at Sceaux circulating his “*Œdipe*,” aimed at Orléans.

From Sceaux, too, issued an active correspondence not only with Cellamare but with Alberoni. A great number of persons, great and small, men and

Phases of France

women, became involved in this political maze, their very number being sufficient to prevent success, were this at any moment probable. Every courtier who was dissatisfied with the new régime was ready to assist. The provinces were sounded, and emissaries, not without effect, were sent into Brittany. Among the chief malcontents were Villeroi and Villars, Marshals of France; d'Huxelles, who presided over the Council of Foreign Affairs, and who supported the Duc du Maine in opposing the change of alliances; and also Madame de Maintenon's protégé, d'Harcourt. These were representatives of the old Court and its political affiliations. Among them, too, were found the Marquis de Pompadour, the Comte de Laval, Cardinal de Polignac, and the young Duc de Richelieu. Perhaps it is not surprising that amidst these high but discontented spirits, and with her advances warmly received by Alberoni, the Duchesse du Maine should have lost her balance, throwing all her peculiar energies into the undertaking. For the moment, she felt herself supremely important. The situation was one satisfying to a woman ever desirous of more attention and more power.

If we except the persons who took part in it, the conspiracy of Cellamare in its effects was negligible. As was to be expected, Dubois and the Regent, who from the very first watched the movement partly with amused tolerance and partly with a statesman's annoyance—decided that the time had come to end the affair, an end which, though

The Duchesse du Maine

ur of the Breton leaders lost their lives, had less tragic consequences than if it had taken place under a less good-natured ruler than Philippe d'Orléans. On December 27, 1718, the Duc du Maine was arrested at Sceaux and taken to Doullens. The Duchess was in Paris at a house which she had taken in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and which had become the Parisian centre of the plot. In the evening an unknown lady, sent by the Marquise de Lambert, warned Rose de Launay that arrests would presently be made. The night was passed in anxious expectation. The following morning the house was surrounded with troops; Rose, separated from her mistress, was sent to the Bastille. The Duchess was first immured in the castle at Dijon, afterwards she was removed to Châlons, then to Savigny, and at the Château de Chamley she completed her period of captivity.

No one was worse fitted to bear imprisonment with dignity or patience. Her main object was to regain her liberty on any terms; she therefore wrote a humble letter to the Regent in which she appealed to his accustomed generosity, promising to avoid politics in future and enclosing a relation of the intrigue in all its ramifications.

Soon after, in January, 1720, the Duchess was free and retired to Sceaux, and in July of the same year the Duke too—a conspirator malgré lui—was released. Greatly to his wife's surprise and agrin he for some time refused to rejoin her at Sceaux, declaring that he wished to live apart from

Phases of France

her, but she did not purpose that her captive should have his liberty and, in the end, from force of persuasion, the Prince, as usual, capitulated, and became again the most humble of her subjects.

Disappointed ambition and the experience of imprisonment left no imprint on the character of Madame du Maine. Politics were soon forgotten, and the old life of social gaiety tinged with an atmosphere of wit and learning was renewed, and with the same zest. If Madame du Maine was a poor conspirator, she was at any rate unrivalled as a queen of a Court of pleasure and of wit.

To describe in detail the life at the Court of Sceaux during its second period would be to repeat to some extent the description of its first years. Failure and its consequences did not prevent the Duchess, in this her maturer age, from resuming the manner of life which she had led when she first began to reign at Sceaux. A "portrait"—that essential feature in eighteenth-century writings—by Madame de Staal, reveals Madame du Maine as she appeared at this time to the sharpest pair of eyes in her circle:

"The Duchesse du Maine, at sixty years of age, has acquired nothing by experience, she is a child with a great deal of wit. She has the faults and the charm of a child. Curious and credulous, she wishes to be instructed in all knowledge, but is content with superficiality. The beliefs in which she was brought up have become principles and rules as to which in her mind she has never had the least doubt; she has submitted once for all. Her ideas formed, she would reject the best reasonings were they contrary to the first impressions that she had received. Any examination is impossible to her levity, and doubt is a state which her slightness cannot support. Her catechism and the philo-

Phases of France

sophy of Descartes are two systems in which she equally acquiesces.

The idea which she has of herself is a prepossession that she receives her opinions the same as others. She believes in herself in the same way that she believes in God and in Descartes, without examination and without discussion. Her mirror has not left her in the least doubt on the charms of her person; the testimony of her eyes is more suspect to her than the judgment of those who decided that she was beautiful and well made. Her vanity has a singular grace, but it may be that it is less disagreeable because it is not realized though, in fact, it makes it the more absurd."

Her Court re-established, the same characteristics, intellectual and social, mark the later as they did the earlier time. Some of the same figures appear on the scene, but the death of Genest, in 1719, and of Malézieu, in 1727, removed two who had been most prominent in her circle. Rose de Launay was still by her side, the same obedient, if critical, attendant, since 1722 Madame de Staal by her marriage with a Swiss officer in the Duc du Maine's regiment, who had a country house conveniently near—an unhappy marriage instigated by her mistress and carried through by her efforts. With Lamotte-Houdard, the poet and critic, on whom had fallen the mantle of Malézieu, the Duchess carried on a voluminous semi-sentimental correspondence, till his death in 1731. Saint-

The Duchesse du Maine

Voltaire still lingered, still gallant, and still à la mode.

Voltaire is the interesting figure most in view on the new stage. In the first period he was a mere unknown youth with his way to make; now he was fast becoming famous. Always in trouble, Voltaire found Sceaux desirable as sanctuary, and he exerted himself to be an agreeable refugee. Ever an indefatigable worker, during one of his periods of hiding here in company with Madame du Châtelet he wrote *Zadig*; here, too, *Oreste*, *Semiramis* and *Catiline* were composed under the auspices of Madame du Maine, and were first produced in the theatre of Sceaux.

A no less interesting figure of Madame du Maine's court in its later period was Madame du Deffand too, still young and in her most charming days, and accompanied by the inseparable Hénault, was one of its chief attractions. The Marquise du Deffand has been so often described that to mention her name in this connexion is sufficient, but her presence is historically important because her stay at Sceaux unites Madame du Maine's Court with the famous salons of Paris, and creates continuity between those remarkable assemblies which we recognize as of the first moment in the history of pre-revolutionary France.

As Madame du Deffand connects Sceaux with the eighteenth-century salons, so Madame du Maine was a link between the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the convent of Madame du Deffand; and be-

Phases of France

tween two eras, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

The influential position of Madame du Maine was shared with another exceptionally important lady, the Marquise de Lambert, and the two became friends. The Hôtel de Lambert was more exclusively a centre of literary life than the palace of Sceaux. Less self-centred than Madame du Maine, Madame de Lambert pretended to no Court, and in her salon self-sufficiency was neither practised nor tolerated. Madame du Maine was the clever, brilliant mondaine; Madame de Lambert, on the other hand, thoughtful as well as clever, desired thoughtfulness as well as cleverness in her guests. So far from wishing to attract attention to herself, the interest her writings excited may have been increased by the difficulties encountered in gaining access to them. Whatever the reason, Madame du Maine was most desirous to become acquainted both with the author and her works, and to attend her literary gatherings, as the following note testifies—Tuesday was the day on which Madame de Lambert received :

“ O mardy respectable ! . . . mardy imposant ! mardy plus redoutable pour moy que tous les autres jours de la semaine ! mardy qui avés servi tant de fois au triomphe des Fontenelle, des Lamotte, des Mairan, des Mongault ! mardy auquel est interdit l’amiable abbé de Bragelonne ! et pour dire encore plus ; mardy ou préside Mme. de Lambert ! Je reçois avec une extrême reconnaissance la lettre

The Duchesse du Maine

que vous avés eu la bonté de m'écrire. Vous changés la crainte en amour, et je vous trouve plus aimable que les mardy gras les plus charmants. Mais il manque encore quelque chose à ma gloire ; c'est d'être reçue à votre auguste sénat. Vous voulés m'en exclure en qualité de Bergère ? Ce seroit alors que je pourrois dire que le mardy est le plus beau jour de ma vie. J'ay grand besoin de ce secours pour apprendre à écrire et à parler ; mais n'est nullement nécessaire, pour cognoistre et mériter le mérite de ceux qui composent vos merveilles assemblées."

Madame du Maine was soon enrolled among the nepherds and shepherdesses who pressed about Madame de Lambert, and this rapprochement between these two leaders of society was the beginning of an intimate intercourse, both personal and by correspondence. It was Madame de Lambert, as we have seen, who sent the warning of her arrest to Madame du Maine. Both these great ladies were regarded as examples by the celebrated group of women who, later in the century, succeeded to their places. It was the peculiar mission of Madame du Maine, who possessed more independence of character than her friend and rival, to unite at her Court the features of the two distinct and opposite epochs—the autocratic and limited character of a waning traditional aristocracy, and the restless and resistless activities, the stirrings and strivings of a rising intellectual democracy.

Though she became devout, and attempted to

Phases of France

bring her recusant habitués to follow her example, the last years of the Duchesse du Maine proceeded without other marked changes in the artificial, idyllic pursuit of pleasure led by her Court. Her manners became more polite and, always coquettish in her dress, she grew yet more fastidious in regard to her personal appearance.

The losses common to advanced years passed lightly over her. The death of Malézieu did not appear to affect her, and that of the Duke, after a long illness throughout which he was nursed by her, in 1736, caused no break in her life, or was the death of her only daughter, in 1743, the occasion of any visible disturbance. As no husband equal to her mother's ambitious views was found for this child, she remained single, and passed the greater part of her forty-five years in a convent. Madame de Staal, prematurely aged by her hard service, died in 1750.

Though Louis XV always showed consideration towards his aunt, the proud little Duchess seldom visited his Court. She did not approve of the royal mistresses, and she preferred to receive rather than to render homage. In 1732 the beautiful renaissance château of Anet came into Madame du Maine's possession by inheritance. This treasure-house of art still stands, though some of its material parts have been transported to Paris. The exquisite fountain of Diana—the château was built by Henri II for Diane de Poitiers—may be seen in the Louvre, and the magnificent gateway in the court

The Duchesse du Maine

the Beaux-Arts. The Duchess' highly developed
esthetic sense made the possession of Anet a source
of extreme delight. Thenceforward her days
and her Court were divided between Sceaux and
Anet.

The Court of Sceaux was now near its end. The health of the Duchess—for a long time failing—at length obliged her to quit the country and, in 1751, she installed herself in Paris in the magnificent Hôtel Moras at the corner of the Rue de Varennes and the Boulevard des Italiens, an eighteenth-century building which she purchased in 1786, one still extant, and no less superb in its decorations and appointments than her other abodes. The restless life was drawing to its close; her death occurred on January 23, 1753, at the age of seventy-seven. She was survived by her two sons who, like their sister, never married, and with them the house of Maine became extinct.

If we stand to-day at Anet or at Sceaux—where if ghosts ever walk hers must surely linger—in a France so different from that in which the Duchesse du Maine played her part, and endeavour to recall the past and her personality, we see that the bar sinister on the house of Maine made her a disappointed woman. Dominated by pride of birth and love of power, no sooner did she realize the want of status of her husband than she resented it. She never became reconciled to the blot on the escutcheon and, child as she was at the time of her marriage, from that time she worked with one—and that

The Duchesse du Maine

impossible—end in view, to eradicate this dark stain. As to the Duke himself, we find astonishingly little to remind us of his parentage. He always gave way to his wilful wife and he suffered the unhappy consequences. Neither rose much above the range of thought of their caste, of which the Duc du Maine cannot be said to be a true type. He was not wanting in intelligence but in character ; he possessed none of the attributes of the grand seigneur. No largesse ever came from his hand, far from being a bold spirit, he was not even counted a brave soldier, a shortcoming not easily tolerated by the French at any period of their story. In a narrative of the siege of Namur, 1695, an anecdote bearing upon this defect is recorded.

Standing among a group of officers, the Duke was questioned as to his post in the forthcoming campaign.

“Why do you ask?”

“Because wherever you were one would be safe,” was the ironical reply.

Madame du Maine cultivated and enjoyed the society of savants and men of letters, but it was not as a seeker after truth, as a reformer, or even to pose as their protectress, it was merely to extort treasure in a refined form from them, while the Duke's natural disposition and aims were simply those of a kindly and peace-loving gentleman, of a close and a scholar. The best of men are not always the most interesting, and the contrast of

Phases of France

character exhibited in Madame du Maine—her consistency and her frivolity, her energy, her active interest in literature and science, and yet the narrow groove of thought from which there is no question of her ever emerging—are individual traits which cannot fail to strike the attention. Her attempt at a political conspiracy was more like an escapade than a serious thought-out plan. It proceeded not from love of country but from love of self. Throughout her life we can trace no aspiration of the soul. She seemed to be wanting in spiritual qualities and in simple affection. Particular in her taste, socially her example was against the grosser pleasure of the period. Voltaire had respect for her literary judgments, but she had no deep convictions or truly great aims. She did not influence the ideas of a Diderot, like that gentler character, Madame d'Épinay. D'Alembert passed through her Court with Madame du Deffand, but she had for no man or woman that passion of friendship and service which Madame du Deffand lavished on d'Alembert. She was no goddess of beauty, no sensuous Ninon de Lenclos. She was rather of the order of the celebrated bourgeoisie Madame Geoffrin in disposition and character. The private life of each was exceptionally decorous, and each was as hard as she was cold, and ruled her Court and her husband with an iron hand. But while the eminent bourgeoisie was celebrated for solid sense, it was a useful quality of which the elf-like little Duchess was totally devoid, as was the Queen of the Rue Saint Honoré

The Duchesse du Maine

the brilliancy and grace, the fastidious idiosyncrasies, of Ludovise, Queen of the Bees. Yet Madame du Maine was other and more than a mere Condaine, an extravagant and shrewish wife, and short-sighted and reckless political adventurer. All these she was; but in addition she had the capacity to gather together and to retain a society which were united the opposing elements of the old and new order more than any other of her immediate time.

Madame du Maine never lost the taste for study. True to the ideals proper to the leader of a salon, she encouraged learning and the arts, and the very selfishness which threatened ruin made her an excellent patron. She suggested Cataline to Voltaire, but for herself it can only be said that she wrote little pieces for her theatre, and verses which by their easy cleverness reflected herself, and in her letters she touched lightly and brightly the surface of things. Madame du Maine is an example of the excess which characterized her time, and she is a type—an extreme type—of a caste and of an important section of French women before the revolution. Her mind and her tastes, in an exaggerated form, were similar to those of other wives and daughters of noblemen, and her restless life was significant of a mental and moral restlessness to be noticed in many others as well as in this tiny descendant of the great Condé. Her entire surroundings with their social and literary atmosphere enable us to form a vivid picture of a phase of

Phases of France

society in France in the eighteenth century. Proud and independent, brave and clever, did Madame du Maine live to-day, she would no doubt be in the van in every manifestation of the feminist movement.

The Duc de Liancourt : Reform before
the Revolution

Chapter 4 : *The Duc de Liancourt :
Reform before the Revolution.*

1747-1827

I

MAY, 1774, found Paris excited and restless. The long and hateful reign of Louis XV was drawing to its close. At Versailles the King was dying of smallpox. Terrified at the approach of death, he summoned physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, and as they defiled before him called out his symptoms to each in turn, begging, promising and praying in the same breath. Despite the nature of the disease, a crowd of courtiers had collected in the royal apartments, not in reverence, sympathy or awe, but gossiping, intriguing, gambling on the life or death of the royal patient. The presence of Madame Dubarry—whom the King had dismissed for the last time—alone was wanting to complete the significance of the painful picture. It was not a death-bed scene appropriate to the point of God, but it possessed a significance greater than the last moments of any King before him, for royalty itself, ancient beliefs, the old order of things, worn out also, were likewise perishing.

Phases of France

Standing somewhat apart among the courtiers was a young nobleman whose interest in the scene was indicated only by the scarcely concealed contempt with which he regarded his companions. It was plain that the thoughts of the Duc de Liancourt were with the Parisians who were singing in the streets :

“ Ami des propos libertins,
Buver fameux et roi célèbre
Par la chasse et par les courtisanes,
Voilà ton oraison funèbre.”

The maladministration of Louis XV had been an excellent school for the propaganda of liberal ideas. Disillusionment was complete; the old régime approached its end. The philosophy of the Encyclopedists permeated generally a society anxious to finish with such conditions, and a bond of union, hitherto unknown, obtained between different classes. The Duc de Liancourt, the friend of Condorcet and Turgot, the nephew of Madame d'Enville, Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, “ la sœur du pot des philosophes,” as she was styled by the philosophers, in recognition of her support, was one of those nobles for whom the times were preparing a difficult part. Belonging to one of the ancient and distinguished families of France, which had loyally served its King in every department of public life, the monarchical faith was to the young nobleman a sacred ideal, the monarchical principle a foundational conviction of mind. Against this mental attitude were arrayed the

The Duc de Liancourt

uments which must assail a man who is a companion of philosophers, a patriot and, in his e, one whose altruistic tendencies could not be pressed. This King's life and death were mefeful and, as he watched the scene, the Duke's ections ran in unison with those of the Parisian ouble.

The life of the Duc de Liancourt gives insight o the less known features of pre-Revolutionary es and contributes valuable facts to the sum of knowledge of that period of ferment which mediately precedes the Revolution. Like the c de Choiseul in another sphere of activity, ncourt is a representative figure in a particular se of French history.

The life of the French nobility and their part society and politics is commonly underrated. at they were all idle and all bad and uniformly osed to progress, is a fixed idea with many. e nobleman who was anxious to improve the e of affairs, who was liberal in his views, is a re known to few. Louis XIV, by compelling owners of the land, individually and as a class, ive their lives at Versailles as courtiers, making and often impoverished men of those who been good landlords and who had lived on e friendly terms with their tenantry than prietors in any other part of Europe, struck the al system and with it the nobles a mortal blow, he could not entirely eradicate the traditions the character of their race and order. Nowhere

Phases of France

in history are seen more striking instances of devotion to duty, of self-sacrifice, of fidelity to ideals, as among the nobility of the old régime in France in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The La Rochefoucaulds were truer representatives of the purely philanthropic spirit than Condorcet, for instance, whose range of mental activity knew no bounds. The Duc de La Rochefoucauld, who possessed his clever and kindly mother's qualities of mind and heart, was acknowledged by his contemporaries to justify the verdict of Barère as "the man the most virtuous, the most patriotic, the most honourable that I have known." Benevolent undertakings and reform movements were Rochefoucauld's first concern, and philanthropy and utilitarianism were the sole aim and labour of his cousin, Liancourt. Liancourt wrote books, but made no pretensions to literary art; like Franklin, whose almanac he took as a model, his writings were undertaken with the sole purpose of carrying out his utilitarian and philanthropic ideas, of calling the attention of the authorities and the public to the state of the poor, the sick and the wretched, or for the purpose of teaching the workers. Liancourt was in sympathy with the philosophers not, however, so much from the love of abstract truth as from the love of humanity.

François Alexandre Frédéric, Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, was born on January 11, 1747, at the château of La Roche-Guyon, to which, a few years before, his grandfather, Duc Alexandre de La Rochefoucauld—whom his grandson strongly resembled in qualities and character—had been banished from Paris to please the reigning favourite at Court, an early example of the disgrace of the counsellors and companions of the King's better inclinations to satisfy the malice of his mistresses. Duc Alexandre was one of the most progressive of the old noblesse, to the scandal of everybody even going to the length of having his grandson vaccinated, an innovation which cost him 1,106 livres (88,480 francs)—but, advanced in his mode of thought, his mode of life did not cease to retain the best features of the feudal system. One of the first to put into practice the new ideas which were in the air, he was one of the last of the grand seigneurs to live on his estates. Banished, he wasted no time in regrets at the Court or Paris, but made good use of his practical turn of mind and spent his life in improving his properties and not less the condition of the people. Water was brought by aqueduct for the use of the village, roads were mended, forests planted, the poor were relieved and industry

Phases of France

encouraged ; the larger part of his time and revenues were thus employed for the public benefit. At the same time he held, like the Duc de Choiseul—not long afterward in the same exiled condition—a Court of his own.

The village, scattered along the bank of the Seine, lies in a sparsely populated district, out of the path of railways, and has been left undisturbed. But the glory of the château disappeared with the old régime and, much of it in ruins, presents to-day—visions of those earlier days recalled—a less cheerful, as a less interesting, appearance. Yet traces of the magnificent domain of the Duc Alexandre may be seen. The richly sculptured fountain, which the Duke erected before his gates, still serves its ancient purpose ; before his time the ground had been denuded of trees, and the grove in which the steep-pitched grey roofs are intermingled at the foot of the château, whose crumbling tower on the hill-top dominates the country, was planted under the direction of his daughter, afterward Madame d'Enville, Duchesse de La Rochefoucauld.

The frivolity and low moral tone of the Court had not affected any part of the family of La Rochefoucauld, which had given France a Queen, writers, soldiers, governors, and courtiers. For centuries this house had been characterized by its philanthropy : “ The house of La Rochefoucauld is a chosen people, they are honest and good people ; there is no arrogance in any of this family, they have common sense and simplicity,” writes

The Duc de Liancourt

Madame du Deffand, a never too tender critic, and the younger Liancourt, by his manner of life, carried out the traditions of his line. The author of the *Maxims* was Liancourt's great-great-grandfather, but few details are to be found of his parents, though it is recorded that they were both virtuous to the point of severity.

In his aunt, Madame d'Enville, whose influence was important in shaping our hero's career, a quick imagination lent wings to the hereditary practical qualities and led on to the practice of an ethical philosophy. "Her heart was given to all the Utopias, her mind to every illusory doctrine," says Liancourt.

It is true that she was quick to champion that which she considered a righteous cause. She managed Voltaire's escape from Paris and seconded his efforts for the rehabilitation of Calas, of the Chevalier de la Barre and d'Etallonde, his companion in misfortune. She befriended Mademoiselle de Mespinasse when cast off by Madame du Deffand, remaining at the same time on good terms with the older friend, whose strong attachment is seen throughout her correspondence.

"I adore," again writes Madame du Deffand, "the heart of Madame la Duchesse de La Rochefoucauld; no longer call her Madame d'Enville. The name of La Rochefoucauld is dear to me since one of her ancestors was killed at the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. You will like her; she has no grand airs, she has an animated manner, she is a little

Phases of France

touched with the modern philosophy, but she practises more than she preaches it."

The Duchess was in fact anxious to help every one who was progressive in the best sense, and among her best friends were the philosophers. Diderot says that she was one of the most excellent women he had ever known, and even Grimm, the German born materialist, loved and respected her. At her magnificent Paris residence they met Condorcet, Turgot, and foreign scientific confrères such as Adam Smith. Arthur Young, the English agriculturist, when abroad, made either her house or the château of Liancourt his headquarters; scholars, chemists, doctors, the rich and poor alike, provided they had mental or spiritual gifts, hobnobbed with the flower of the aristocracy of France in her salon.

The Duc de La Rochefoucauld dying a few years after their marriage, their son, who was her inseparable companion and had the same inclinations and the same friends as herself, was an ardent admirer of Julie de Lespinasse. Madame du Deffand seldom referred to her old companion, her offence had been too great, but her affection for the Duchesse de La Rochefoucauld and her son drew forth a complaint from the sore heart and the silence of years was broken on this painful subject in a letter to the Duchesse de Choiseul. "Monsieur de La Rochefoucauld will give you this letter. He is the most assiduous of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's courtiers; I do not know if this intimacy has

The Duc de Liancourt

injured me with him and with Madame d'Enville, but I see them less often than formerly."

Liancourt was not such a favourite or so widely known in the salons of Paris as his cousin La Rochefoucauld. Sensitive and serious, he had no conversational gifts. Though Madame du Deffand knew La Rochefoucauld so well, her attention was only drawn to his cousin by Horace Walpole, who, meeting him in London, sang his praises, and in this case quicker witted than the Parisians, ridiculed those who failed to appreciate him. "All the good that you tell me of Monsieur de Liancourt made me wish to know him. I found him very natural, very simple. I do not know how it happens that here he is set down as stupid."

Liancourt enjoyed his stay in England, running away from London drawing-rooms to the countryside, where he discovered his vocation and studied farms and manufactures to his heart's content. At the moment of his return to France Choiseul fell from power and Liancourt was one of those liberal nobles who followed him in his exile to Chanteloup—much to the vexation of his Royal Master, for at that time Liancourt shared with his father the post of Grand Master of the Wardrobe.

Liancourt's early life was passed at the château of La Roche-Guyon. Simple village folk were his sponsors at baptism—an indication of the democratic tendencies of the family. Intended for the army, he was sent to La Flèche at fifteen. His military career was creditable from its beginning. At eighteen he was a captain, five years later commandant of the regiment of La Rochefoucauld, and successively Governor of Bapaume, Major-General and, at the age of forty-one, inspector of cavalry in Alsace.

Many of the qualities for which he was afterward eminent are apparent during this stage of his life; he was active and able in the performance of his duties and, like all Frenchmen, he was friendly with his soldiers, interesting himself in their individual welfare, and he took care that merit should be rewarded. In the midst of this full life he found time for attendance at Court, for travel and study, to look after the family properties and to build the foundation of the philanthropical work which was in time to become the pivot of his existence.

Marriages were arranged at an early age, and Liancourt was married at seventeen and a father at eighteen. His wife was the daughter of the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, and her family,

The Duc de Liancourt

like that of La Rochefoucauld, was to be found later among the foremost of those nobles who primarily assisted the cause of the Revolution.

The personal appearance of Liancourt as a young man belies the reputation of stupidity of which he was accused by the fashionable world of Paris. His portraits—of which there are no less than thirty-seven in existence—generally represent him in his various public capacities. In one, which shows his English proclivities, he stands at the left of a table drinking tea, wearing a red waistcoat after the English fashion. The extravagant costume of the period—the powdered hair thrown off the forehead, the high stock, the ruffles, the rich material, the coat resplendent with orders—suits the type. The marked eyebrows, Roman nose, full lips and decisive chin suggest the typical aristocrat, and the full and brooding eyes the love of humanity and the consistent philanthropy which was his life work. He was tall, erect, and well built.

One of the forms of the restless energy characteristic of the years immediately preceding the Revolution was a sudden impulse toward travel, and we see intellectual leaders of the age leaving their country for a time seeking experience and knowledge. As a rule either England, the land of Locke, whose ideas fallen on fertile soil had so largely formed their own, England where Voltaire studied and began the remarkable propaganda which was to change the face of society, was their Mecca ; or the same philosopher was a loadstone which drew

Phases of France

Frenchmen to Switzerland; French savants also crossed the Alps into Italy, when travel was difficult, to study the results of the excavations of Pompeii. Hitherto the French had not practised the method of sending their sons abroad for study; now foreign travel, which entered into the scheme of education of every young Englishman of quality, attracted their attention. Liancourt, himself aware of the benefits of travel, as soon as his sons were old enough, sent them to England, and more than once, as their education progressed.

Also in England the influence of French thinkers, of Montesquieu and then of Rousseau, was felt. Many Englishmen thought that they must pay a visit to France every year. Hume, Fox, Horace Walpole, Gibbon, and cultivated Englishmen generally spent considerable time in Paris. This exchange of visits between France and England formed the introduction to the personal friendships such as united Madame du Deffand and Horace Walpole, Hume and Madame Necker. Liancourt falling in with Arthur Young, they soon became intimate. Their meeting was a stroke of good fortune for each. Idealists, their ideals assumed practical and simple shapes. Each was a true lover of the soil, and each loved his fellows without regard to social rank. Whilst Young, who could not make his own farm pay, received on agricultural subjects the respectful attention of correspondents in every part of the world, from Catherine of Russia in the East to Franklin in the West, Liancourt, a peer of France,

The Duc de Liancourt

was impoverishing himself both for his King and for his peasants.

A distinct effect on taste and fashions was produced on either side the Channel by the constant intercourse between the two shores. The English habit of country life was brought over and became the fashion in France, where during the early part of the century the châteaux had, after the Grand Monarque had exacted the presence of the nobles, great and small, about his person, for the most part lain idle, abandoned to the rooks. But with Liancourt the love of country pursuits lay deeper than any desire to be à la mode, for he possessed a love of the soil as a birthright, and it was his strongest instinct to so do by it that the land and the people who lived upon it should receive the greatest possible benefit. He had at hand unbounded facilities for indulging these impulses; at the death of his father, lord of one of the still magnificent properties in the kingdom, it contained everything needful for the fulfilment of his schemes of reform, and was well adapted for the trial of his industrial experiments. The splendid château of Liancourt did not entirely escape the depredations of the Revolution, but the regard in which the Duke was held by the common people caused it to be spared the utter ruin which was the fate of so many habitations of the French nobility. It will not be difficult to reconstruct the ancient building—which lay within easy distance of Paris—as it stood when Liancourt entered into its possession.

Phases of France

Remodelled in the seventeenth century, it resembled other domestic buildings of the period of which Versailles is the finest example and whose magnificence it rivalled. A covered gallery, with ornamental pilasters and pediments, ran along the upper story of the main structure, from which two wings diverged. It contained a theatre, a library of twelve thousand volumes—which survived the Revolution—and had the appointments and was furnished with the luxury proper for a residence whose hospitality had been accepted by Louis XIV, by the Regent and Mazarin. The charming valley of the Oise lay before it, while the waters of the Brèche and Bérenelles added to the freshness, fertility and beauty of a plain broken by undulating hills.

The life within the château proceeded—on a grand scale—much as at other French country houses of the period. The dramatic pieces of which the times were so prolific were acted, the châtelain and the châtelaine and their guests being the performers, the rival compositions of Glück or Piccini were keenly discussed, or the company amused themselves with chess. Out of doors there was the chase, and in the well-stocked park pheasants were so numerous that the farmers—as in modern England—complained of their depredations.

The Duchess was a sympathetic and spirituelle châtelaine, the queen of the fêtes champêtres given to the surrounding countryside, with ready kindness for all, and bringing a contagious enthu-

The Duc de Liancourt

ism into everything she did. Marie Antoinette was not the only woman in her kingdom who aspired at times to lead the simple life, the Duchess also had her dairy—à la Trianon—a delicate dairy of white marble and, like the Queen, she played the dairymaid.

The English influence, visible everywhere, was obvious in the garden. Twenty-five fountains sprang high in air, after those at Versailles, tinkling cascades and terraces remained, but, in place of the formal lines, the geometrically planned beds of the Nôtre, the Duke fashioned winding paths bordered with flowers, leading through ornamental rubberies and blooming thickets to arbours and other gardens, the tennis courts or fruitful orchards. Here Liancourt welcomed the friends gained in his travels. Here came Lord and Lady Spencer, with their daughter Georgiana, the celebrated beauty, afterward Duchess of Devonshire. But the first of these foreign friends was always Arthur Young, whose advice was sought on every question and especially on the agricultural experiments for which the fertile and well watered valley offered an excellent field.

One of the causes of the French Revolution is often stated to be the condition of the peasant. The absentee landlord is clearly productive of abuses but, on the eve of the Revolution, though his lot was not one to be envied, the French peasant was undeniably better off than the labourer in neighbouring countries, and his restlessness under the same yoke was due to the quick Gallic intelligence rather than to inferior environment. This was naturally increased by the contagious spirit of progress which was in the air and which had attacked all classes.

“The education of the people is too much neglected: the question is even raised if he should not be left in ignorance, as though knowledge of his own interests would not make him better,” wrote Liancourt.

He put into practice Franklin’s idea of popular instruction by means of the almanac, and papers were printed and circulated among the peasants containing moral maxims, useful hints, and information of a practical nature relative to the cultivation of the soil. In 1786 Liancourt read a paper before the Royal Society of Agriculture, of which he was a founder, on the homely subject of the advantages of the American method of cooking

The Duc de Liancourt

vegetables for the peasant, for whom they were important articles of food, for in these practical ways, in the everyday details of life and labour, lay, in his mind, true philanthropy. The wave of modern progress, too, had set in and was beginning to be felt in the remotest backwaters of the kingdom; there was even an increase in prosperity, and though the peasant's tax was higher he could better afford to pay it.

Liancourt determined to have a model farm after the English pattern, and with Young's assistance began a series of experiments which had an important influence on agricultural productions and on industrial conditions. Forestalling the revolution in his economic reforms, he divided his lands into lots which he let to the peasants, the proceeds from which he used for their benefit. He introduced the English turnip, cultivated the potato—an innovation in France—and cows and sheep were imported from England, Switzerland, and Spain.

But as his mind dwelt on schemes of reform and public improvement they assumed larger proportions and his next step was taken in a new direction. From agricultural he turned to industrial projects, and to his initiative we owe our modern schools of technical instruction. The care of the orphan children of officers had long been a favourite charity, but Liancourt, to whom, as a soldier, this naturally appealed, widened its application. He believed, with Turgot, in the dignity of labour, and

Phases of France

that gentlemen should not engage in industrial pursuits without loss of prestige seemed to him absurd. He therefore decided to put these principles into active operation and near by, on the Mount of Liancourt, he established a school where a military training for the sons of officers was supplemented by a technical education in the mechanical arts. Its usefulness to the State was quickly recognized, the King became its patron, and it was imitated in England by George III in the foundation of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea.

Anxious to set a personal example in industry, as in agriculture, Liancourt built mills in the neighbouring villages and in his park for the manufacture of tools and textile stuffs; and brick and tile yards were established. The priests—in the country districts generally but little removed from the peasants—sympathized with his efforts and enthusiastically co-operated in his work. The dole system would not have appealed to Liancourt; no idle persons in health were given charity; no aged or infirm suffered for want of it. The men and women worked in the fields and mills; the children, who were taught the rudiments of learning, assisted the young girls—a part of whose earnings was put by for their dower—at the spinning factories. Old women were given hand work which could be done at home. Thus every member of the community was enabled to be self-supporting, and therefore self-respecting, adding to the wealth and health of the State. In a few years' time, under

The Duc de Liancourt

his patriarchal yet progressive régime, the face of the country and the condition of the inhabitants were transformed as by a miracle. The quasi-royal château of Liancourt, with its English gardens, its manufactories, its model farm and training school, was a delightful picture of peaceful progress which is seldom connected with this period of French history. But this very progress, encouraging as it was to the enlightened nobleman, helped to blind him to the possible results of the revolutionary tendencies which were at work throughout France.

At the death of his father, in 1783, Liancourt, who had been Assistant Master of the Robes, first to Louis XV, and then to his successor, was appointed Master of the Robes. In this capacity he was brought into close personal contact with Louis XVI, who made of him, so far as a sovereign could, a friend. A great noble and a courtier, as well as a reformer, Liancourt was in a position greatly to influence the King.

Louis XIV weakened the noble, the tyrant of old, but he himself became the tyrant, and the common people, in their difficulties, had nowhere to turn. But now the tyrant, the one and the other, was out of date; neither Louis XVI nor Liancourt and his associates were tyrants. As early as 1788 even the Royal Princes proposed to renounce their pecuniary rights in respect of the people. On many of the questions in dispute Louis and Liancourt were agreed, for it is one of the ironies of history that the well intentioned monarch showed himself abreast of the philanthropic and forward movement of his time. He encouraged and assisted Liancourt in his benevolent enterprises and listened sympathetically to his counsel on financial and, later, on political reform.

Unlike the traditional courtier, Liancourt was

The Duc de Liancourt

honest and frank to a degree. Devoted as he was to the King, he never forgot the people. A friend of the King, he was far from being a satellite of the Court or of the Queen. The two branches of the family of La Rochefoucauld were joined with the Clermont-Tonnerres, the Montmorencys, the Noailles, the Castellanes, and other powerful families who strenuously supported the reform movement and were ranged against the reactionary forces supported by the Queen. She wished to have the Duchesse de Liancourt for one of her Ladies-in-Waiting, but the Royal demand was refused, and from this time, it is probable, there was no love lost between Marie Antoinette and the family of La Rochefoucauld. The reform party from La Fayette through all its ranks was alike obnoxious to the blind and headstrong Queen. In time the King had to choose between them. Liancourt was an ally of Turgot and Malesherbes, he was associated with d'Alembert and with Condorcet, and he assisted Necker in his prison and hospital reforms as he had Turgot in his economies.

Liancourt has been truly named in France "the wisest and the most far seeing of the friends of Louis XVI," and "one of the men of his times who had a passion for liberty, justice and benevolence." One of the first to institute legal steps for political reform, Liancourt presided at the first election of candidates for the Assembly of Notables in 1787. A constitutional monarchy was his aim, and a plan of reconstruction under his name was

Phases of France

published with the heading : " Finance, the national credit, political and commercial interests, the military strength of France," in which he attacked primarily the privileges of his own order. " Despotism has sometimes given the world great Princes ; the aristocracy has always encumbered it with tyrants. . . . Subjects of the same empire, equally dear and precious to their sovereign, ought to have rights in common . . . privileges should be renounced which throw upon the poor the part that the rich ought to support, old forms which have multiplied abuses . . . Who has must pay." The clergy do not escape. " If the fathers of families pay, why should not the prelates, the abbés, the Benedictines, the Bernardines, the Carthusians pay ? . . . The number of monasteries should be reduced to the advantage of the poor."

In 1789 the meeting of the Three Orders was naturally the talk of the day, and something of its significance even penetrated the dull ears of those courtiers who frolicked with the Queen at Versailles. One day the King interrupted the mingled jests and protests which the approaching Assembly inspired at Court, and turned to Liancourt. " And you, Duc de Liancourt, is it your intention to be elected ? " " Yes, sire, with your consent."

From his services to industry and philanthropy, his rank and influence, it was inevitable that Liancourt should be called to represent his order, and he inspired and probably drew up the first revolutionary cahiers. The proposed liberties to be

The Duc de Liancourt

guaranteed the people included regular meetings of the Three Estates, provincial Assemblies, the abolishment of lettres de cachet, liberty of the press, religious freedom and equality of taxation.

How would the King receive it? Occupying the place he did in the Royal household and in the King's intimacy, Liancourt felt in duty bound to state his position plainly, and he sent him his cahier with a confidential letter, significant as an expression of his sense of responsibility as a popular representative.

“Sire,

The Order of the nobility of Bailliwick of Clermont-en-Beauvoisis has done me the honour of electing me for its deputy to the States-General. The powers and instructions which have been given me are, in my opinion, adapted to present circumstances, directed toward the glory and advantage of your Kingdom, the happiness and the tranquillity of Your Majesty; they conform to the views that Your Majesty has deigned to make known Himself. Consequently I have taken the oath to follow them faithfully in spirit and to beg that the petitions which are contained in them may be granted. . . .

But, Sire, a great charge attaches me to your person. I must more particularly than any other, by virtue of this title, render account to Your Majesty for my conduct. Your Majesty treats me with kindness; I believe myself worthy of it by my very sincere and very true attachment for Your Majesty.

Phases of France

. . . I could not support the idea that my conduct could ever be interpreted by Your Majesty other than it merits to be, and that I have confidence to think it will always merit.

I dare, then, to address to Him the cahiers to which I have sworn to be faithful. Your Majesty will deign to read them. If Your Majesty thinks that I have undertaken engagements which are displeasing to Him, Your Majesty will inform me of it. I am, Sire, permit me to say, attached to Your Majesty by personal sentiments of respectful affection, of esteem and of veneration for Your virtues. I dare to flatter myself that Your Majesty has no doubt of it. I am deeply flattered and grateful for the good opinion with which Your Majesty permits me to believe that I am honoured. I possess near Your Majesty a place of which I am, as it is easy to believe, happy and proud, and which I have extremely at heart to see perpetuated in my family. But, . . . painful as the sacrifice would be, I should not hesitate to make it if I had reason to fear that in the course of affairs the conduct which fidelity to my oath would dictate could be represented to you as contrary to the duties of my place and that I was guilty of ingratitude. . . .

This letter is not and never will be known but to Your Majesty. No one has any suspicion of it. I felt the necessity for it in my heart. This step, then, cannot be misconstrued either as a sudden impulse, or as meant for public effect; that aim would not accord either with the deep respect

The Duc de Liancourt

which I owe Your Majesty and which I bear in my heart, or with the frankness and straightforwardness which I profess.

I am, Sire, the most humble, the most devoted and the most faithful subject of Your Majesty.

DUC DE LIANCOURT.

Clermont, *March 14, 1789.*"

The King's somewhat ambiguous reply is as follows :

"I send you, Monsieur le Duc, the papers which you sent me yesterday ; I had not finished reading them this morning when I saw you. I know your heart and I have always had reason to count on your attachment for me ; I do not doubt that in the assembly at Clermont you acted conscientiously. When I ordered the convocation of the States-general, I gave permission to all my subjects to tell me what they thought would be for the welfare of the State. When the States assemble I shall discuss with them all the great objects which are presented, and, before that time, I ought not to express an opinion on particular deliberations when they are made under prescribed rules. Do not doubt, Monsieur le Duc, of my entire esteem for you." ¹

Wise and clear sighted as Liancourt showed himself toward the King, he did not in the least foresee the frightful calamities which would result from the

¹ The original letters are in the Musée des Archives, Paris.

Phases of France

drastic changes in view ; on the contrary he firmly believed in the early realization of his dreams and that a Utopia was preparing for France. He might have been justified in his hopes had the people been given time in which to adjust themselves to new conditions and become gradually accustomed to political power. But the movement was rapid, and Liancourt was one who unwittingly pulled down his own house about his ears for, though he blushed for the privileges of his order, he had not yet gone so far as to consider its destruction. Although he retained his post for the time at Court, and though his avowed policy was one of conciliation, it was always his own order of which he demanded sacrifices, and he constantly voted with the Third Estate.

On June 27, 1789, he burst through all trammels and boldly addressed the Assembly with a courage and energy which proved the strength of his convictions :

“However attached I may be to the rights of the nobility, I admit that if I believed it was necessary to sacrifice theirs for the public good, if I believed that it was possible by so doing to save the country in the present dangerous crisis, I would faithfully fulfil the will of my constituents by carrying out in their name this sacrifice. It is very pleasing to me to repeat here that one of the most precious instructions which I have received from them is never to forget that we are citizens before we are nobles. . . .”

Twice a week Liancourt opened his house in the

The Duc de Liancourt

de Varennes to his political friends, an oddly assorted assemblage arrayed in motley garb. American simplicity was the fashion, and short hair and plain clothes were now seen for the first time mingled with the elaborate dress of the old régime. The fall of despotism was confidently discussed, the subject naturally calling forth not a little criticism from some of his colleagues, who began to show their distrust of him, while in his turn he publicly denounced the espionage of their secret society which had been formed in opposition to the radical clubs. But he was still a nobleman, still a courtier and in the confidence of the King. The position was painful and the rôle became daily more difficult as his attempts to draw the King from his vacillating position and at the same time to place himself frankly and definitely with the reform party failed to be realized.

The historical events of July 11, 12 and 13, 1789, which led up to the epoch-making 14, need no comment. Necker was dismissed, Paris rose, the French Guards joined with the people, and the Assembly grew more pressing in its demands. The night of the 14, when the deputies, terrified at what was taking place in Paris, refused to leave their posts, and the King peacefully sleeping. The news of the fall of the Bastille warned Liancourt of the immediate danger which menaced the throne and the royal family. Leaving the panic-stricken Assembly, he hurried to the Palace. As Master of the robes he had instant access to the bedroom of the

Phases of France

King, from whom the gravity of the situation had been concealed, and who listened bewildered to his ominous story. "It is a great revolt!" he exclaimed. "No, Sire," replied Liancourt, "It is a great Revolution," words which have since become historic.

The next morning Liancourt, amid tumultuous applause, announced to the Assembly the approach of the King, who promised the withdrawal of the troops from Paris and Versailles, Necker's recall, and proclaimed his unshaken confidence in his people in an address which had been drawn up by Liancourt. On the 17, the King, still led by the Duke, took the road to Paris, with his sinister bodyguard of citizens, men and women, armed with pikes and hatchets and dragging cannon adorned with flowers.

Liancourt had become the intermediary between the King and the Assembly and for this triumph he was elected to the Presidency, which he held from July 20 to August 4. The Queen and her party were now his open enemies, and the King was being moulded to their will, though Liancourt's influence did not at once cease, and when the flight of the Nobles began and the Queen and Court sought to follow their example, Liancourt, entering unannounced, interrupted the final family conclave, where their plans were being matured, and persuaded the King to remain. The escape fixed for October 7 was thus averted.

The cahiers, revolutionary as they read at first, were soon felt to be behind the times. On July 10 the Assembly of the Nobles had met at Clermont. Liancourt demanded a free hand. "The King and States-General," he assured his constituents, "will no longer receive deputies charged with limited powers."

Claims which would once have appeared to be extraordinary seemed to be part of the natural course of events, and, with some dissenting, some enthusiastic, voices the majority endeavoured to resign themselves to the unknown, but apparently the inevitable, and the vote was carried. From the

Phases of France

first Liancourt had supported the Left, and he kept pace with the expansion of their platform. He soon made up his mind that the sacrifice of his order was necessary, unmindful of the fact that he thereby would suffer the loss of power, prestige, property, rank. The nobility formed a thick and prickly hedge between king and people ; it should be cut away.

A contradictory state of affairs was in being. The poor and weak beheld with amazement their demands met with responsive sympathy from the rich and mighty who, intoxicated by the new doctrines, believed all things to be possible. Independence was discussed in the army, democracy by aristocrats, philosophy was the topic in the ball-room, and ethics in fine ladies' boudoirs. So we read in the contemporary memoirs. Opposing forces and anomalous situations such as these can continue in Utopia only, whether in France in the eighteenth century, in the Russia of yesterday or elsewhere to-morrow. The Russian débâcle and the French Revolution were, however, very different in their effects. The virile and unconquerable character of the French who not only unite courage, chivalry and tenacity, but who are the most logical people in the world, caused the theorizing which has had fatal consequences in Russia, to produce confusion for a time only in France.

On the night of August 4, 1789, when the peasants were freed from their dependency, the nobles yielded their ancient rights and the clergy their

The Duc de Liancourt

hes, Liancourt saw his most extravagant reforms assume material shape. The medal which commemorates this unparalleled day was struck off at his instigation.¹

In 1789 the Three orders were united in their personal devotion to the King, and in their loyalty to the monarchy. A Government without a King was foreign to their ideas. The popular leaders, including Marat, were monarchists. Camille Desmoulins compared Louis XVI to Trajan. In the Assembly he was idolized. As late as the midsummer of 1791 the Jacobins were afraid to breathe the word "Republic." Liancourt did his utmost to put heart into the feeble monarch to lead the revolution by a channel which would make him a constitutional king over a loyal democracy. He defended the absolute veto and demanded for the King full executive power. Filled with the chivalrous ideals and the courage of his race he defended the inviolability of the person of the King after Varennes, he defended the constitution, he defended religious tolerance, he defended his friends and tried to save the first suspects from the vengeance of that Revolu-

Voted by the Assembly, August 4, 1789. The contract for engraving was signed October 24, by Liancourt and by the brothers Duvivier and Gatteux. On the obverse of the medal the bust of the King and the inscription: "Louis XVI sauveur de la liberté française." On the reverse, the Three orders grouped about an altar in the hall of the National Assembly with the inscriptions: "A la Patrie," and "Abandon de tous privilèges."

Phases of France

tion which he had helped to evoke and whose possible evolution he had failed to foresee.

The common aim of uniting sovereign and nation brought Liancourt and Mirabeau together. Mirabeau hoped to get in touch with the King through the Duke who, for his part, saw in the great statesman and orator a powerful ally. With Talleyrand and the Comte de La Marck they discussed the best means of persuading the King to take a minister from the Left. In a paper drawn up by Mirabeau on November 7, 1789, both Liancourt and his cousin La Rochefoucauld, are mentioned as ministers, Liancourt as Minister of War, "because he is trusted, is firm, and has personal affection for the King, which will give him confidence." But their schemes were cut short by the decision of the National Assembly (November 7, 1789), which forbade deputies to hold cabinet offices. Another decree of like nature lost Liancourt his position at Court. This was a severe blow. Nothing in the course of events thus far had interfered with their intimacy. The idea of a constitution coincided with his attachment, and he beheld, through rosy clouds, visions of his King, on whom had fallen a great trust, fulfilling the promise of an unexampled opportunity, and, at the head of the new movement, leading his country on to peaceful industrial supremacy and happiness. Anything which concerned his Royal master awoke a passion of loyalty and, alarmed by the course of events, he begged for a place in his bodyguard. He earnestly desired

The Duc de Liancourt

that his political acts should not be misunderstood by the King, and to be near him in time of danger. Such was the tenor of a letter addressed to the King, September 15, 1791, but to which he received no reply.

Liancourt and his cousin figured prominently in the political clubs, but the Société de 1789, founded in 1790, frequented also by La Fayette, Bailly, Mirabeau, Roederer, Talleyrand, Sieyès, André Chénier, Roucher and Condorcet, most nearly approached their ideas. Constitution and King were their watchwords, and they rallied together in an attempt to save both liberty and crown. It was I may say in passing—through the efforts of this society that the ashes of Voltaire were brought back to Paris, and at the death of Benjamin Franklin the members went into mourning and his bust was placed in their hall.

On September 30, 1791, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved. His post near the King had been taken from Liancourt, and his enemies had the King's ear. He decided to retire to his château, where he hoped again to pass his time in peaceful pursuits among his neighbours. But here fresh difficulties arose. Hitherto he had been popular with the masses, he had suffered from ill-reporting his own class alone. Now evil persons and divisions among the populace came to the surface and his château and its inhabitants were destined to their share of the sacrifices demanded by the Revolution. The usual complaints of labour were

Phases of France

brought against the employer, and the man who had built his manufactories at a loss to give his tenants paying employment, whose fields were theirs free for the tilling, for whose cause he had forsaken and ruined his best friends, was denounced by them as a monopolist. The nobles were now flying for their lives, and on the road to the frontier lifelong friends, forgetting and forgiving political differences, stopped at his gates for a moment as they passed. Vainly he begged them to turn back for the sake of the King, for whose future he was alarmed.

On April 20, 1792, war was declared, and Liancourt sought and obtained the post of Lieutenant-General of Normandy and Picardy. He had an ulterior object in view in gaining the command of the divisions which occupied Rouen and Havre. It was to safeguard Louis, to prepare a shelter and a retreat for him should it be necessary. Rouen was constitutional and inclined to the King. The army with him, Havre to fall back upon—a seaport by way of escape should worst come to worst—the plan promised well and seemed to make ready for all possible emergencies.

In spite of these preparations Liancourt did not yet realize how dark was the aspect of affairs; it was a precautionary measure alone which led him to undertake to fetch the King from Paris to a place of greater safety; he did not perceive any real and immediate personal danger, and thought that were the people convinced the life of their sovereign was threatened they would overwhelmingly support

The Duc de Liancourt

him. Rouen was within the distance from the capital prescribed by the constitution ; it was not to be a flight but a royal visit to a loyal province. Liancourt had already sent the King 190,000 livres : now, in the hope of facilitating this step, he offered him the rest of his fortune with the exception of an income of a hundred louis, promising he should have 100,000 livres within the first two weeks of August.

The events of June 20, when the Tuileries were invaded by the populace, warned Liancourt that the time for action had come. The Rouen project was no secret, and the constitutionalists Dupont, Bailly-Tollendal and Malouet, urged the King on ; wavering, he finally refused, swayed by the Queen, who had also disdainfully rejected La Fayette's plan of escape, saying it would be unendurable " to owe one's life a second time to him," for she relied only on a rescue by the allied enemy. But, contrary to her expectations, the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, July 25, crystallized public opinion, welded together all factions and sealed the doom of the monarchy. On August 10 Louis was dethroned. This was the nation's reply. The monarchy had fallen and, powerless to help the King, Liancourt, if he wished to save his own head, was obliged, in his turn, to fly. With some difficulty he succeeded in reaching England—August 20, 1792—where he learned of the death of his cousin. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld met his death at the hands of a mob under the eyes of his mother and wife. The crime was bitterly denounced by Liancourt, who eulogized the victim

Phases of France

as the most faithful friend of justice and of the public weal. "He professed," he declared mournfully, "the cult of liberty." Liancourt was now the head of the house of La Rochefoucauld, and the family title his, as much or little as it might henceforth be worth.

Louis Capet was on trial for his life, and the first act of the Duke, a refugee in England, was to draw up a defence on his King's behalf, for he never ceased to regard the dethroned monarch as an honest reformer and a real advocate of liberty who had, unfortunately for himself and his country, been misled by wrong counsels. In his defence he gives his personal testimony as an eye-witness of the King's conduct on July 14 and after the return from Varennes; he dwells on his love of justice and his real wish for the development of his country and the improvement of his subjects' condition; but he does not point out the defects of his very virtues, caused though they were by family affection and sincere, if narrow, religious convictions. Copies of this vindication were sent to Barère, president of the Convention, and to Malesherbes, the King's counsel, and Louis, in his prison, was given this last proof of the Duke's devotion. In the vain hope of stirring up sympathizers and advocates it was publicly circulated.

Louis was executed on January 21, 1793. With his death were ended the hopes, the efforts and the disappointments which filled the best years of Liancourt's life.

The simple narrative of his part in the Revolution shows that Liancourt's position was that of the constitutional reformer. His efforts were ineffectual, partly from the inability of the King and Queen to grasp the truth of his dictum that they were faced by a Revolution, to stay which the most drastic reforms and concessions were necessary. A constitutional reformer of Liancourt's type can never become a thorough-going revolutionist; revolution is no less detestable to such a man than reaction. The natural consequence ensued in his case. Unable to introduce peaceful reforms, he fell before the popular passion and the enlightened and generous reformer became the penniless refugee.

Liancourt was an exile for nearly seven years. Four of these were spent in America. Although a democratic monarchy always remained his ideal, he was an admirer of the Washington government, whose example had such weight in France. The reasonable plots of his compatriots in England were hateful to Liancourt, as was the interested policy of England. The French émigrés in the United States were of an altogether different character; discriminating between the Reign of Terror and the Revolution, they followed from their distant refuge

Phases of France

the success of the Revolutionary arms with as great enthusiasm as was felt in Paris.

The First Consul, in his course of conciliation, early examined the petitions of the émigrés and the members of the Constituent Assembly were the first to be struck off the list of the proscribed. Liancourt returned to his native land in November, 1799, and resumed, so far as the change in his circumstances would allow, his old rôle of a practical reformer, but under changed political conditions. To save something from the wreck of their fortunes, and to supply her husband and children the wherewithal to live, the Duchesse de Liancourt had had recourse to a ruse by which she was enabled to preserve funds which would otherwise have been confiscated—she produced a divorce. Through the intermediary of Arthur Young the Duke had received this touching, if paradoxical, proof of wifely devotion.

The Duke might have been in easy circumstances financially, an English admirer having left him a handsome legacy. Through delicacy it was refused and he was now a poor man, but this seemed to trouble him little.

“I begin by telling you that I have become a farmer, an English farmer, even,” he wrote Young, in 1802. “All my movables have been sold, so I am only a poor tiller of the soil.” He was now obliged to turn his attention from the labourer to labour; from experiments on a large scale, unmindful of expense, to strict details of profit and loss. If

The Duc de Liancourt

he regretted his fortune it would seem to be because he had less to give away.

Under the successive changes of government in France after his return, Liancourt invariably played some part and held some public position. Under the first and second Restorations he was a member of the Upper Chamber, and he was elected to the Chamber of Representatives during the Hundred Days. Elected by a large majority—though he had absented himself from the elections—and believing it a duty to accept office in a legislative body, he took his seat in the Chamber where he collaborated with Carnot, Chaptal, Delessert, Berthollet, Laborde and Cuvier, an assemblage of intellectuals, who calmly proceeded with their task of framing the laws under the guns of the invaders.

Liancourt's democratic convictions did not abate with the years. After the fall of Décazes, in 1720, he joined de Broglie, Royer-Collard, La Fayette and Benjamin Constant in their struggle for civil rights and religious freedom. For this reason, perhaps, a final misfortune overtook him. Neither compliance with ancient forms nor advancing years saved him from the malevolence of the Court party and, at the age of seventy-six, he was deprived in a single day of the direction of seventeen public offices which he held gratuitously. Education, industry, philanthropy alike suffered. It was a political disgrace which, like that of his grandfather, the Duc Alexandre, only called attention to his superiority. He retired to his château, where he

Phases of France

lived tranquilly with his books in the wing which, before the Revolution, had been the servants' quarters. The property may be seen to-day much as it then was, shorn of its ancient grandeur, but put to a use which would have gratified the Duke, for the buildings which are left are occupied by a school modelled after the English public schools, with their vigorous sports and healthy and practical views of life. The magnificent forest trees had been felled, by his orders, to give place to tilled fields where he carried on his agricultural studies and labours as if the astounding events of the Revolution and Empire had been mere episodes. A small garden, after the English style, was the only vestige which remained of the brilliant parterres, and a mimic lake alone of the fountains, cascades and ornamental waters which formerly adorned the palace, whose right wing and stately façade he also demolished. He returned to Paris early in March, 1827, to support a measure for the liberty of the press, and there his death occurred, at the age of eighty, on the 23rd of the month.

In a summary of Liancourt's work of reform particular notice must be given to his purely philanthropical efforts both before and after the Revolution.

The eve of the French Revolution is the epoch of the first efforts for organized charity by individuals—in which Liancourt is pre-eminent. The ideas of Rousseau had taken root in all grades of society; good works had even become the fashion. In 1789 the people had a naïve faith in the Revolution, believing that they had only to ask in order to receive, and the cahiers were unanimous in calling for hospital and prison reforms, proper care for the insane, help for the poor, and the suppression of beggary, by the practice of which so-called houses of charity were largely maintained—the very error for the correction of which they had been established. Entrance to Liancourt was nowhere denied, and he made the rounds of the heterogeneous institutions which served as hospitals, asylums and prisons and whose condition he reported to the King and Assembly. The result was the organization under the Constituent Assembly, in 1790, of the *Comité de Mendicité*, of which Liancourt was the first resident.

It was the most ambitious scheme of social organi-

Phases of France

zation and amelioration ever attempted. Its aim was no less than to free society from material ills. There were to be no homeless orphans, no sick denied health through want, or infirm in need of comfortable environment, no labourers who lacked work, or aged without means. The project, organized on scientific principles, embraced the entire span of man's life. No longer an isolated being, both patronage and charity flung aside, respected and self-respecting and delivered from the nightmare of destitution and disgrace, he was to be protected and to protect.

The generous spirit of 1789 created the *Comité de Mendicité*; the ebb of the Revolution saw its fall. The National Assembly could pass admirable resolutions, decree sweeping reforms, and institute magnificent projects which, in the chaotic state of affairs, could not be realized and, with the establishment of the Directory, the *Comité de Mendicité*, which had been legislated now for, and now against, through the intervening years, was finally abandoned by the government.

Liancourt here again found his opportunity. In 1800, to meet the pressing need of the moment, he opened soup kitchens and established public dispensaries, modelled after those of the United States, and the humane societies which had taken the place of the haphazard charities of the Old Régime were gradually resuscitated.

The idea of secular assistance had been evolved. Charity hitherto in its history had been exclusively

The Duc de Liancourt

controlled and jealously guarded by the Church, which kept fast hold of its vast clientèle of orphans and aged. The Revolution brought the campaign of Kings against priestly aggression to a head, and one of its effects was to rescue charity from the hands of the Church. Like the Duc de Choiseul, Liancourt was ready to attack abuse of power, whether by the State or by the Church, but this did not prevent him from being the most religious, as the most liberal, of men. He detested dogma and sectarianism, and the *Société de Morale Chrétienne*, founded in 1821, was the last body over which he presided. An attempt to eliminate dogma and to harmonize the different Christian communities, it had followers among both Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Duc d'Orléans, and his son the Duc de Chartres, were members, and it became so influential that it was feared, as well as disliked, both by the Restoration and by the Church of Rome. Nor did Liancourt's acumen for practical affairs diminish with the years. The school of the Mount of Liancourt, in the general reversal of things, had been transferred to Compiègne, where it became purely military, and from thence to Châlons where, again placed under Liancourt's direction, it regained its original technical character. It was his hope, by means of this and similar institutions, to build up a body of skilled workmen for the State, trained in the arts and in the trades. Keenly appreciating the importance of scientific movements he seemed to be aware intuitively of the approaching develop-

Phases of France

ment of steam and electricity and its results in the expansion of labour. The present industrial army of mechanics, electricians, engineers and metallurgists is the proof of the truth of his theories, the wisdom of his foresight.

Liancourt paved the way for the modern Exposition by the establishment of the Conseil de Perfectionnement, in 1817. The next year he started schools at Liancourt for working men. The first Savings Bank was founded in Paris in this year, of which Liancourt was elected President. General interest was felt in this enterprise which it was hoped would increase thrift among the workers. Its administration was entirely gratuitous, large numbers of employees of business houses, and of the government, offering their services.

Liancourt had no literary pretensions; his writings having been undertaken solely to further utilitarian or philanthropic ends. To his exile in America is due *Les Voyages dans les États Unis d'Amérique*, a journal of his travels, and containing observations on the structure of American institutions and their value as examples for Frenchmen. American institutions and ideals, so passionately upheld in France in all ranks of society when Franklin was the popular idol, were now seen in operation through personal observations. It is dedicated to his "chère et malheureuse tante," Madame d'Enville. The Duchess did not live to see it. The friend of every progressive measure, the companion of philosophers, the good angel of the

The Duc de Liancourt

poor, witnessed the death of her son—stoned to death in the streets—suffered imprisonment during the Reign of Terror, was released in October, 1794, and died soon after. Her son also sought to inculcate American ideas in France in his writings, more particularly in his translation, *Constitutions des 13 États d'Amérique*, printed in 1783. *Les Prisons de Philadelphie*, first published in 1796 by Liancourt, in Philadelphia and Amsterdam, as well as in Paris, went through many editions. *L'État des Pauvres*, being extracts from Sir Morton Eden's work, appeared in 1799, and was published by order of the Minister of the Interior. *Le Systeme Anglais d'Instruction*, an abridgment of Lancaster's work, was brought out in 1815. These, with a multitude of speeches, reports, and official documents, make up the sum of Liancourt's writings.

The life of the Duc de Liancourt is one of those which bind together ancient and modern times in France and weave them into an harmonious whole. Born under the Old Régime, and living well into the following century, he belonged to both periods, had an affinity with both, and in both took a prominent part. Soldier, courtier, economist, philanthropist, he was a many sided man and, though a practical man of business, an enthusiast who, as is the fortune of such, often saw his idols shattered. An advocate of the Revolution which destroyed Louis XVI and the monarchy, he was the sincere friend of the King and a defender of his crown ; duke and peer, he experienced the distress and was treated with the ignominy of an enemy to his own order.

Liancourt, like the Duc de Sully and many another French nobleman, essayed to be, if I may vary Bolingbroke's famous phrase, not a patriot King, but a patriot nobleman, to unite the duties of a courtier with the obligations of a great landowner.

Straightforward and supremely unselfish, Liancourt's character is readily understood. Simple and clear, his was a mind which is easy to grasp ; philosophical abstractions were nothing to him, and he was neither a romanticist nor a visionary ; he was a man of action, a zealous officer, a landholder who

The Duc de Liancourt

lived on his land, an incorruptible courtier, whose sense of justice led to the attempt of correcting the abuses he saw in his daily life among his soldiers, his peasants, and at Court.

His life illustrates the most remarkable phase of history, for his was not a singular figure in his age. For the first time an aristocracy was seen engaged in the practical consideration of ameliorating on a large scale the conditions of those living under less favourable conditions. Liancourt was a leading spirit in a considerable group of aristocrats whose political sympathies connected them with the reformers and the liberal party ; in addition his mental bias drew him toward the scientists, and his benevolent disposition towards philanthropy.

As his life neared its end and his advanced years, his illustrious birth, the consistent part he had played in the Revolution and in exile, his manufacturing and agricultural experiments, his popular schools and moralist propaganda, his charities, his persecution and above all, his patient and undaunted persistence in following out his practical ideals, combined to give Liancourt a unique place and influence in all grades of society.

In sympathy with the fundamental ideas which produced the Revolution, his practical and reasonable temperament prevented him from becoming a partaker in its excesses ; he stopped at constitutional measures, and his individual efforts at reform had the effect of causing him to be regarded with suspicion at Court, whilst gaining no influence with the

Phases of France

Revolutionary party. It has always been the same in great crises ; the moderate reformer is crushed between two millstones. Liancourt is a signal example of this in his own age and country.

Madame Necker : The Literary Salon
on the Eve of the Revolution

Chapter 5 : *Madame Necker : The
Literary Salon on the Eve of the
Revolution.* 1737-1794

I

THE salon of the eighteenth century in France as an aid to personal ambition is strikingly instanced by the careers of two remarkable persons who began life in obscurity and who possessed neither wealth nor rank. It was the instrument through which Madame Geoffrin and Madame Necker attained the summit of social power. Their sole resources in the pursuit of their aims were shrewd intelligence and a pleasing personality, to which must be added uncommon common sense and persistent perseverance. Neither condescended to intrigue, nor was their ascendancy over men acquired by feminine arts. Their private lives would not have been censured in the Court of Queen Victoria.

The career of Madame Necker is even more extraordinary than that of Madame Geoffrin. A Swiss—though of French descent through her mother—she was a foreigner in France. She had all the practical qualities of the Swiss, and none of the mental sup-

Phases of France

pleness of the French and, notwithstanding lifelong effort in imitating those among whom she lived, she remained a Swiss to the end of her days. Yet I select the salon of Madame Necker as representative of a phase of France because it is the last of these assemblies before the Revolution.

It cannot be too clearly recognized that the salons of the eighteenth century were not merely social gatherings, not merely literary exchanges ; each was a focus of revolutionary tendencies. "Courtiers, philosophers and agreeable and clever women were here collected, whose discussions, animated by a spirit of criticism and inquiry, were destructive of these very surroundings."¹ Nowhere could argument and criticism revolve so freely and so untrammelled as in these peculiar social gatherings, the distinctive influence of which radiated from them subtly, destroying old beliefs, religious, constitutional and social. That Madame Necker should establish a salon is noteworthy because it shows that the salons of Paris of the eighteenth century had become a recognized and essential feature of French political and intellectual life. Madame Necker with her shrewd common sense found that a salon was a political and social necessity of the age essential to social and political success.

By nature ambitious, Madame Necker from early youth was possessed by social and intellectual

¹ *The Salon*, p. 22, by Helen Clergue, Putnam Sons, New York and London, 1907.

Madame Necker

aspirations. How could the daughter of a plain Swiss pastor, married in her own rank of life, hope to gratify such desires? Intelligent—even intellectual—by her marriage she had also become rich. And she lived in a country and at a time where and when such conjunction of capacity and circumstance was productive of power.

When Madame Necker arrived in Paris, illiterate Madame Geoffrin, the widow of a successful manufacturer, was at the height of her prodigious success; Madame d'Épinay, the wife of a ruined farmer-general, was also the centre of an influential circle; and Madame du Deffand, old and blind, disputed with Julie de Lespinasse, a woman of obscure parentage, small means, and weak health, the sovereignty of the city's most exclusive society.

With youth and health, beauty, brains and money, why should Madame Necker not compete with these? To this end she bent all her energies, and she was eminently successful.

Madame Necker, considered so brilliant by her contemporaries, was outshone in the opinion of a later generation by her more brilliant daughter, Madame de Staël. To-day she is generally remembered as the mother of the famous authoress and the wife of a celebrated minister. It is true that Necker owed his political advancement not a little to his wife, and that Madame de Staël's remarkable gifts were developed by her mother's careful education, but Madame Necker had an important career which was independent of either.

Phases of France

It was one in which Buffon, Gibbon and other great names, both of men and women, figure, and hers was a rôle which had a far-reaching influence leading to an unforeseen climax, of which the salons—and hers, as I have said, was the last of those important groups which preceded the Revolution—were the direct propagators.

But before her marriage and her Parisian successes, Madame Necker had undergone trying experiences—the chief of which is of special interest to English readers. Of these something must be said, nor can her birth and childhood be passed over without a few words.

On June 2, 1737, a baptism was celebrated at the Protestant church at Crassier, a small village on the first slopes of the Jura mountains, between Geneva and Lausanne. The father was the village pastor, Louis-Antoine Curchod. The child, a daughter who was given the name of Suzanne, was educated as a son would have been, and, at sixteen, a prodigy of learning and of beauty, was writing letters in Latin to her father's learned friends, and capturing the hearts of the younger men. Besides facility in languages both ancient and modern, Suzanne also had a taste for philosophy and for mathematics, but she was by no means a student only of the exact sciences and played the harpsichord and violin, beside painting passable pictures.

She appreciated the attention and praise which her person, mind and accomplishments excited, and the portrait which, with ingenuous naïveté, she drew of herself at this time depicts an attractive girl :

"I have a youthful and bright face," she says, "with a fair complexion and fair hair, animated blue eyes full of laughter, vivacity and sweetness, a small, well formed nose, a responsive mouth and a tall and well-proportioned figure. But a countrified manner and a kind of awkwardness in my move-

Phases of France

ments contrast greatly with my soft voice and gentle features."

If Suzanne had a good opinion of herself, she did not exaggerate her youthful charms. She was sought after both in Geneva and Lausanne, where she reigned an undisputed Queen at the Académie de la Poudrière, of which she was the founder and president, and in the Société du Printemps. At these reunions, unhampered by their elders, the young people met for social and intellectual intercourse. It was here Suzanne met Gibbon.

The foreigner has been associated with the beautiful shores of the Lake of Geneva from the time of Calvin and John Knox to our own, with the League of Nations. In the eighteenth century many and varied are the familiar names connected with its history. For some, like Voltaire, it was an asylum—though Rousseau, in search of one, was thrust forth, an unlucky exile, even from his native land. At this particular time Voltaire was at Ferney, Rousseau was near at hand at Motiers-Travers, and they, with the celebrated physician Tronchin, drew every traveller of note in Europe to the Lake.

Gibbon, toward the end of his life, made Lausanne his home because he could, with his actual income, live better there than elsewhere, and because the flattery of the townspeople was pleasant to him. But long before he had become famous the future historian had made the acquaintance of Lausanne where he was sent, a boy of sixteen, for the purpose

Madame Necker

of bringing him back to the Protestant faith which he had forsaken for the Church of Rome. Four years later, when both were twenty, Gibbon was engaged to be married to Suzanne Curchod.

Suzanne Curchod was the only woman who ever for a moment made Gibbon think of marriage, and their relations form a passage in his life of which surprisingly little has been said considering the notable part which each afterwards played in the world of letters and society. The emotions did not occupy a large space in Gibbon's life and perhaps for that very reason it is well to know that he was capable of inspiring love if he did not himself suffer seriously from its pangs.

The story is best told by the actors themselves, and the reader can judge the merits of the case, though he must be warned that Gibbon does not always in his evidence show as much regard for truth as we could wish.

The first writing on the subject may be found in Gibbon's *Journal* which contains under the date June, 1757, the brief entry :

"I saw Mademoiselle Curchod. 'Omnia vincit amor et nos cedemus amori!'"

His autobiographical account of this one emotional passage in his life is more explanatory though it is by no means a full confession :

"I need not blush at recollecting the object of my choice ; and though my love was disappointed of success, I am rather proud that I was once capable of feeling such a pure and exalted sentiment. The

Phases of France

personal attractions of Mademoiselle Susan Curchod were embellished by the virtues and talents of the mind. . . .

In her short visits to some relations at Lausanne, the wit, the beauty, and condition of Mademoiselle Curchod were the theme of universal applause. The report of such a prodigy awakened my curiosity : I saw and loved. I found her learned without pedantry, lively in conversation, pure in sentiment, and elegant in manners ; and the first sudden emotion was fortified by the habits and knowledge of a more familiar acquaintance. She permitted me to make two or three visits at her father's house. I passed some happy days there . . . and her parents honourably encouraged the connection. In a calm retirement the gay vanity of youth no longer fluttered in her bosom ; she listened to the voice of truth and passion, and I might presume to hope that I had made some impression on a virtuous heart. At Crassy and Lausanne I indulged my dream of felicity ; but on my return to England I soon discovered that my father would not hear of this strange alliance, and that without his consent I was myself destitute and helpless. After a painful struggle I yielded to my fate : I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son ; my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life. My cure was accelerated by a faithful report of the tranquillity of the lady herself, and my love subsided in friendship and esteem."

Blind Madame du Deffand, tapping Gibbon's

Madame Necker

face with her fingers, thought it was not that of a man at all, and that she was the victim of a joke. Add to his odd visage a short stature and extreme corpulence, and he can be seen as Sir Joshua painted him in his prime. It is difficult to realize that a man whom we are thus wont to picture to ourselves could arouse an attachment that outlived absence, silence, and even contemptuous indifference. That love lies largely within the lover's breast is proved again in the instance of Suzanne Curchod. She loved, and Gibbon was transformed.

But when the two first met, Gibbon possessed at least the charm of youth which is common to all, and an uncommon mental power was no doubt already to be distinguished in some degree in his features. At the age of twenty he was not entirely without personal attraction, if we are to believe Suzanne :

“He has beautiful hair and hands,” she writes, “and the air of a person of condition. His countenance is so spirituelle and uncommon that I do not know any which in the least resembles it. It has so much expression that one is always finding something new. His gestures are so appropriate that they add much to what he says. In a word, it is one of those extraordinary faces that one is never tired of studying. He knows the respect due to women.”

So Gibbon appeared to Suzanne, transfigured by the illumining inner flame.

As will have been gathered from the preceding

Phases of France

correspondence, Gibbon proposed marriage to Suzanne Curchod and was accepted. Returning to England the following year, his father, on being told the step his son had taken, refused his consent. After four years of silence Gibbon wrote Suzanne an explanatory letter breaking his engagement. A few months later, in the spring of 1763, he returned to Lausanne. In the meantime her parents had died, leaving her alone and destitute.

It would be inferred, reading Gibbon's pages, that his promise of marriage, not revoked till after years had passed, was speedily withdrawn. Gibbon could never be said to be chivalrous, and he was making out a case for himself at Suzanne's expense when he wrote these well turned but misleading phrases. He would also have us believe that Suzanne was tranquil and cheerful under his defection, but a letter to him written soon after his return to Lausanne tells, in her own words, what had been, and still was, the true state of her feelings :

“ SIR,

I blush for the step I am taking, I should like to hide it, I should like to hide it from myself. Great God ! Is it possible that an innocent heart can stoop so low ? What humiliation ! I have suffered much, but never more deeply. It does not matter, I must go on. I owe this effort to my peace ; if I do not seize this opportunity there is no longer any peace for me. For five long years I have sacrificed myself entirely and incon-

Madame Necker

ceivably for this chimera ; at last my mind, romantic as it is, is convinced of its error ; I beg of you on my knees to feel for a foolish heart ; sign an avowal of your indifference and my mind will adjust itself to the truth, certainty will bring the peace for which I long. You will be the most miserable of all men if you refuse to be frank, and God who sees within my heart, and who loves me without doubt, since He makes me suffer the hardest trials, will punish you in spite of my prayers if there is the least concealment in your reply, or if by your silence you make a plaything of my peace of mind."

Returned by Gibbon, beneath is written in her hand these significant and painful words : "A thinking soul is punishment enough, and every thought draws blood."

The letters require little comment either as regards the occurrences with which they clearly enough acquaint us or the impressions which these occurrences made on the writers. Gibbon's love had not withstood the first opposition. On her part, Suzanne, who possessed stronger affections, could not easily believe in the transientness of his and was with difficulty persuaded that it was indifference which had kept him so long silent and finally led him to break his promise.

The depth of Gibbon's wound—to judge by his own account—and his good feeling, also, in his relations with Suzanne may well be questioned. He was wanting in any sense of responsibility toward

Phases of France

the person with whom he had exchanged vows of fidelity. In the letter in which he finally severed the connection we may read that "two hours" of reflection determined him to yield to his father's wishes. The decision which was to affect the whole course of the life of another, as well as his own, was measurable by minutes. Though Gibbon made love to Suzanne, the fever was of short duration. He never long—perhaps never seriously—considered marriage, afterward writing: "A matrimonial alliance has ever been the object of my terror rather than of my wishes." The confession to readers of the *Autobiography* that his sensibility was only "moderate" was, perhaps, unnecessary.

That which was little more than an episode in Gibbon's youth was a momentous matter to Suzanne Curchod, whose mind, once fixed, was not easily turned from its purpose. Still faithful, she still loved and still hoped, nor would she relinquish her lover without a struggle. With her consent Rousseau, at that moment at Motiers-Travers, and besieged by all Europe for advice on all manner of subjects, was appealed to by the pastor Moulton, the lifelong friend both of Suzanne and of Rousseau, begging him to employ his eloquence on her behalf with Gibbon. The philosopher's sensible response, though it may have soothed wounded pride, was not of a nature to feed illusions:

"You give me," wrote Rousseau, "a commission for Mademoiselle Curchod which I shall do badly precisely because of my esteem for her. The

Madame Necker

oldness of Monsieur Gibbon makes me think ill of him. I have seen his book—it was dedicated to Mademoiselle Curchod—the intellectual is his aim; he strains after it. Monsieur Gibbon is not any man: I cannot believe that he is Mademoiselle Curchod's. He who does not appreciate her is not worthy of her; but he who appreciated her and leaves her is a man to be despised."

Ferney is the scene of events in the final chapter of our romance. Here, in September, the two met by chance—for the first time, it would seem, since their parting as engaged lovers—at one of those theatrical representations in which Voltaire, in defiance of the pious Genevan fathers, persisted, and to which he delighted to gather the surrounding countryside.

Suzanne, agitated by the unexpected encounter, could scarcely speak, but Gibbon's words and manner unmistakably revealed a change of heart which she could no longer conceal from herself, and he was finally delivered from the troublesome pertinacity of an affection which had outlived his own and which, once taken root in an intense nature where constancy was temperamental, could not be destroyed without stress and storm.

Two years went by before their next meeting. It was at Paris. Suzanne Curchod, the penniless and forsaken orphan, had become Madame Necker, the idolized wife of the rich banker, and Gibbon, who hastened to present himself at her door on his return from Italy, again found reason to complain

Phases of France

of a too cordial reception. But this time it was a cordiality which precluded the slightest jealousy on the part of the husband, and which pointed to a complete cure on the part of the wife.

"The Curchod," he wrote, "I saw at Paris. She was very fond of me, and the husband particularly civil. Could they insult me more cruelly? Ask me every evening to supper, go to bed, and leave me alone with his wife—what an impertinent security! It is making an old lover of mighty little consequence. She is as handsome as ever and much genteeler, seems pleased with her fortune rather than proud of it."

It may be interesting to compare this letter with one which Madame Necker wrote about the same time, where she records her altered opinion of Gibbon and discusses their changed circumstances. She frankly confesses her satisfaction that he should be a witness to her new-found happiness and to the luxury which he could never have afforded:

"I do not know, Madam, if I have told you that I have seen Gibbon; I was sensible of the pleasure beyond words, not that I have any sentiment left for a man who has so little deserved it, but my feminine vanity has never had a more complete and more fitting triumph. He remained two weeks in Paris; he came to see me every day; he had become gentle, yielding, humble, modest even to timidity. He was a perpetual witness of the tenderness of my husband, of his capacity and of his happiness. A zealous admirer of opulence, he

Madame Necker

made me remark for the first time that which surrounds me, or at least up to then it had made one but a disagreeable impression on me."

So ends Gibbon's love story. Certainly he played an unheroic part, for he had little romance in his composition, and one may search in vain among his subsequent correspondence in the hope of detecting any tender word for her who was, after all, the only love of his life.

Not that their intercourse was broken; it even flourished under the new conditions. Thirteen years after Gibbon wrote from London, where Monsieur and Madame Necker visited him in Bentinck Street: "I am a good deal taken up with the Neckers. We are vastly glad to see one another, but she is no longer a Beauty." And in 1779, in reply to his mother, who seemed to fear that his former inclination was the cause of a return visit to Paris: "The constancy and danger of a twenty years' passion is a subject upon which I hardly know how to be serious. I am ignorant what effect that period of time has produced upon me, but I do assure you that it has committed very great ravages upon the body, and that at present she is very far from being an object either of desire or scandal."

"La belle Curchod" none the less had developed into the fascinating woman who held the fastidious Thomas under her dominion throughout his life, on whom the great Buffon bestowed the passion-admiration and affection of his last years. Though he often visited Madame Necker when,

Phases of France

driven before the Revolution, she took refuge at Coppet, Gibbon makes scarcely any further allusion to her in his correspondence. He had caused her suffering, but, having—by force of fortuitous circumstances—risen superior to it and to her former state, Madame Necker could afford to forgive him, and she cherished the kindest feeling towards her old lover which, as the years increased between that youthful and passionate experience and more prosaic married life, were more freely and frankly revealed. Perhaps she admired him against her will. Or, again, perhaps she was grateful to him, realizing his deficiencies and what she had escaped. With a touch of malice as of truth she had advised him against marriage, saying that, to be happy, it must be entered into in youth, and it was not without gratification to her that he never did marry.

“Come back to us when you are free. The moment of your leisure ought always to belong to her who has been your first love and your last. I cannot make up my mind which of these titles is the sweeter and the dearer to my heart.” These warm words were written from Coppet shortly before they were separated by death. Madame Necker’s paramount love for her husband can never be questioned, but one of her intrinsic characteristics was fidelity in her attachments. She was never found wanting in this quality in any of the relations of life—to parents, husband, child, friends—even towards a cold and cruel lover. Always straight

Madame Necker

forward, her strong affections were never concealed, and her spontaneity, frankness and sincerity are in striking contrast to the discreet and calculating character of Gibbon.

On May 8, 1793, Gibbon returned to England, where he died the following year. Madame Necker only survived him a few months. They were born and they died in the same year.

In Suzanne Curchod's letter to Gibbon, written in anguish of mind after the humiliating evening spent at Ferney, she prophesied that Gibbon would have to regret her. We have no proof that her prophecy was verified, but it may be supposed that had he married her, a woman so true, so sensible and so able, would have adjusted herself to his environment as she did to that of Monsieur Necker, that she would have been of the same assistance in Gibbon's career, and that his life, so sterile outside his intellectual achievements, would have benefited from contact with one who was superior in feeling.

As it is, the attachment between these two celebrated persons is chiefly remembered through Gibbon's famous sentence: "I sighed as a lover, obeyed as a son."

Life must be measured not by time, but by events, and much occurred in the life of Suzanne Curchod within the short period between the end of her engagement with Gibbon, in 1762, and her marriage to Necker. The death of her father, in 1760, had left his wife and daughter destitute. Suzanne was obliged to earn a livelihood for both by teaching—the only employment open to her, but one uncongenial to her ambitious character. Madame Curchod's surviving years were, as Suzanne remorsefully perceived, clouded by the sight of her unhappiness; her death, in 1763, left her daughter quite alone. An unacceptable suitor who came forward was put on probation while she accepted an invitation from Madame Vermenoux—a Frenchwoman visiting Switzerland to consult the famous Tronchin—to return with her to France as her companion. This lady, a widow, was herself considering a proposal of marriage from Necker and while she was hesitating whether she should descend from the ranks of the noblesse, to which her marriage had lifted her, to an alliance with the rich but bourgeois Swiss banker, Necker, meeting the fair and accomplished companion, was, like d'Alembert under the spell of Julie de Lespinasse, turned from his allegiance, and changed his addresses from

Madame Necker

one to the other. Necker managed his affair more delicately than d'Alembert; Madame Vermenoux, unlike Madame du Deffand, showed no chagrin, and harmonious relations continued between them all.

The reign of the pre-Revolutionary literary salon opened brilliantly with the Hôtel de Rambouillet, which dominated French standards of literature and of manners from 1610, and when, in 1764, Madame Necker entered upon the scene, the power of the salons had become such that they may be said to have ruled Paris. The Court and the strictly aristocratic society were autocratically governed by the Maréchale de Luxembourg; the literary, philosophical, and artistic coteries by Madame Geoffrin; Madame du Deffand selected her society from among the choicest of the men of letters and the aristocracy, and to these Julie de Lespinasse added the philosophical element.

Madame Necker was not long in drawing around her a literary circle. She was in a situation to satisfy her most ambitious desires, for a marked change had taken place in France in the position of moneyed men since the opening of the century, and the profession of men of letters, which had formerly relied upon the King and Court for support, now found a new power arising, which afforded greater protection. This was the power of money. King, Court and Kingdom were poor and daily growing poorer, yet extravagant living was continually on the increase. All sections of society,

Phases of France

from King to peasant, were in need of money, and the few who were in a position to supply it became powerful. Writing was a precarious means of existence, and the house of Necker offered peculiar inducements to needy men of letters, for Madame Necker's ambition never tired until she succeeded in embarking her husband on a political career and thereby was able to offer to her habitués a double support—political and financial.

In a few years' time Madame Necker assembled in her salon two opposite and important elements of society—leaders of finance and men of letters—to whom later was added a third constituent in Necker's political associates. Then the stronghold of the aristocracy was conquered when she gained the support of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, and her apartments in the rue Michel-le-Comte, where her husband's bank was established, becoming too circumscribed for the increasing number of her guests, Necker removed to the sumptuous Hôtel Leblanc, in the rue de Cléry. This was their home until Necker became Controleur-Général, in 1776, and this was, says the late Marquis de Segur, in his study of Necker, "the much regarded centre where, under the guidance of a clever and beautiful woman, the fortunate union of politics and of ideals, of the friends of tradition and of reform, was every day more closely cemented."

Madame Necker never lost sight of her ambition, and her somewhat crude methods of attaining it sometimes caused adverse criticism. Marmontel

Madame Necker

relates complacently how pleased she was to make his acquaintance; Diderot, also, was deceived by the enthusiasm which his reputation inspired and misapplied her impersonal admiration—an admiration which was only meant for his writings. Grimm, like Diderot, was not at first as anxious as she for the meeting. The views of each underwent a change, and each became her friend. According to the abbé Morellet, Madame Necker directly applied to him, to Marmontel, and to the abbé Raynal to assist her in founding a literary salon, and she was advised by them to take Friday for her day in order not to conflict with the Mondays and Wednesdays of Madame Geoffrin, her advisers being first of all bound to the famous bourgeoisie of the rue Saint-Honoré. Madame Geoffrin, too, soon received the young Swiss into her intimacy.

Madame Necker was not so fortunate in her choice of lieutenants as were her celebrated rivals. They were by no means the devoted adherents such as Julie de Lespinasse possessed in d'Alembert, Madame d'Épinay in Grimm, or Madame Geoffrin in Fontenelle. Marmontel complained that her salon was instituted neither because of her interest in her guests, her love of letters, nor ambition for herself: it was formed, he declared, to amuse her husband at home and to spread his fame abroad. Whatever truth there may have been in this assertion, Necker, silent and preoccupied, only took a passive part in his wife's assemblies. The abbé Morellet complained of her severity, of the absence

Phases of France

of freedom of speech except on literary subjects, and especially the restriction which debarred religious discussion. Politically the abbé was opposed to Necker, which did not, however, prevent him from accepting favours from the minister when in power. Condorcet Madame Necker failed to draw to her salon on account of his passionate admiration for Turgot whom Necker superseded.

The salon of Madame Necker was, therefore, filled at first by recruits from the salon of Madame Geoffrin, and we find the same persons intimate in both: Suard, the journalist; the poets Saint-Lambert and "Gentil" Bernard; Thomas, the director of the Academy; Diderot and d'Alembert, collaborators in the *Encyclopédie*, the last named connecting her with Julie de Lespinasse and with Madame du Deffand, who, though she always held a somewhat disdainful attitude toward the ambitious parvenue, and though she was always critical on leaving her, always returned to her. Guibert, said to be Julie's last lover, and Madame de Staël's first, began by being Madame Necker's friend.

Notwithstanding difference in faith, Madame Necker made friends among the French clergy with whom her charities and her husband's position brought her in contact. Venerable archbishops as well as worldly abbés were among her visitors, and there were much talked of exchanges of hospitality with Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Toulouse, the unsparing persecutor of the Jansenists and philosophers. Galiani, the spirituel

Madame Necker

abbé, shone brightly in Madame Necker's salon. He professed a great esteem for her, but she was in reality too much the puritan to be thoroughly congenial to the expansive, light-hearted Italian, and he plaintively murmured that he found her too virtuous. Obligated to leave Paris, Galiani still strove to live its life by means of correspondence, and in one of his spirited letters to Madame Necker he draws a lifelike sketch of the persons who composed her salon, and of what they did on her celebrated Fridays :

“ There is not a Friday that I am not with you in spirit. I arrive. Sometimes I find you finishing your toilette, sometimes reclining on your couch. I seat myself at your feet : Thomas suffers in silence, Morellet rages aloud, Grimm and Suard laugh heartily, and my dear Count de Creutz notices nothing. Marmontel finds the example worth following, and you, Madame, struggle between two of your most charming virtues, modesty and politeness, which causes you to regard me as a little monster, but more embarrassing than odious. Supper is announced. We go in. The others eat meat ; I abstain and eat a great deal of that scotch cod that I like so much and suffer from indigestion while admiring the ardour with which abbé Morellet carves a turkey. We leave the table, we have coffee, everybody is talking at once. Abbé Raynal holds with me that Boston and America are for ever separated from England, and at the same time Creutz and Marmontel agree that

Phases of France

Gretri is the Pergolèse of France. M. Necker thinks it is true, bows and takes his leave. Such are my Fridays."

Madame Necker's salon was the scene of the famous gathering of seventeen men of letters, in 1770, when the statue to Voltaire was proposed. According to Grimm, it was Madame Necker who conceived the project. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre read *Paul et Virginie* before Madame Necker and her friends, and when, strange to relate, most of the company fell asleep. They appeared to prefer a play written by her daughter Germaine—already remarkable at the age of twelve—which was produced at Saint-Ouen.

A feature of the salons is the predominance of men among the guests, and women did not take a prominent place in the salon of Madame Necker, though she was more hospitable to them than was Madame Geoffrin. Madame Suard was the only woman who accompanied her husband to the Fridays. At first Madame Necker had few women friends, though she soon found little difficulty in obtaining any acquaintance she desired. But the Fridays were held quite apart from these more purely social relations.

Madame de Marchais was one of Madame Necker's first friends, notwithstanding the high moral standard of the one and the lax morality of the other. Madame de Marchais was ugly, clever and fascinating. Never able to obtain an assured place in the exclusive circles which opened to receive Madame Necker, her jealousy was aroused, and this led to a rupture between them. Madame Geoffrin, on the other hand, was a friend from first to last. An old woman when she formed this intimacy, she was nevertheless at the height of her fame and influence. If she had been an ordinary woman she might have feared a danger in the appropriation by Madame Necker of her own particular group, but jealousy was not one of Madame Geof-

Phases of France

frin's faults and the new favourite soon became one of her best loved personal friends. The two resembled each other, and this was true not only of character but also of environment as well as of aspiration and success, each springing from the bourgeoisie had bourgeois virtues and bourgeois failings and in each ambition was a ruling passion, taking the same form—to be a central figure in the life of their time.

In the summer Madame Necker and the Maréchale de Luxembourg were neighbours, when they occupied their respective châteaux at Saint-Ouen and at Montmorency. The conquest of the Maréchale was of the greatest value; her wit was as much feared as that of Madame du Deffand, and her power was such that, as in the case—in a greater degree—of the Duchesse du Maine, it was considered more necessary in high society to be received by her than at Versailles. Notwithstanding a scandalous youth, she was strict in regard to the behaviour of others, and her granddaughter, the Duchesse de Lauzun, was one of the most modest and lovable young women in the Kingdom, whether due to her grandmother who brought her up, or to her natural character. “C’est une charmante personne,” wrote Rousseau, reflecting on the period spent in the grateful shadow of Montmorency, “elle a une figure, une douceur, une timidité de vierge.” Madame Necker was naturally inclined to one who was amiable and good like herself. “Les portraits d’imagination sont les seuls,” she

Madame Necker

wrote, "qui lui ressemblent." She attempted none, however, in the *Portrait d'Émilie*, ending a long panegyric by exclaiming, "Les grâces naïves pourroient inspirer des sentiments trop passionnés s'ils n'étoient réprimés par la noble décence de ses regards et par l'expression céleste de sa physionomie." The praise lavished by all on the Duchesse de Lauzun, as on the Duchesse de Choiseul, proves that high ethical views existed and were valued in all classes of society, even though corruption existed in high places.

Besenal, severe towards the Maréchale, could only say that she had fulfilled her duty to her granddaughter: "One cannot deny that she is a chef-d'œuvre of education and the most perfect Roman that ever was known."

As the Duchesse de Choiseul was eulogized, so writers again unite in praise of the Duchesse de Lauzun:

"I could not stop looking at Madame de Lauzun," writes Madame de Genlis, "she had the most interesting face and the most dignified and the sweetest bearing that I have ever seen; she was extremely timid, without being insipid, always obliging and kind, but not too meek; there was an original and piquant mingling of refinement and naïveté."

With the accession of Louis XVI a transformation occurred in the etiquette of the Court and in the fashions, customs and manners in France. The rigid and onerous ceremonial of the Court of old

Phases of France

France was hateful to Marie Antoinette, who replaced it by free and easy manners in keeping with the liberty enjoyed at the thatched cottages of the Trianon. Exchanges of visits between Paris and London became more and more frequent, and were responsible for many of these changes. The Duc de Lauzun, the Duc de Chartres and other noblemen of the first rank brought back from England English tastes and idiosyncrasies. English stuffs were worn, English wall-paper was substituted for tapestry; they drank tea. Less innocent were the high play and the betting which accompanied horse-racing, also brought over, and in which the Queen and Court were the first to indulge.

If the period before the Revolution is regarded as wanting in deep feeling as well as morality, in the life of pleasure which was led by the Court and by large numbers of the aristocracy the energies of stronger natures were not stifled. The letters of Julie de Lespinasse and Mademoiselle Aissé prove the existence of deep passions, and general censure of the society of the period must be confined to certain sections of Court circles. Similar profligacy among the bourgeoisie or lower classes was unknown, and among the aristocracy there were women of austere lives, such as that of the Duchesse d'Ayen and her five daughters, afterwards the Vicomtesse de Noailles, the Marquise de la Fayette, the Vicomtesse de Roure, the Marquise de Montagu and the Marquise de Grammont; and the dutiful existences of the Duchesse de Choiseul and of the

Madame Necker

Duchesse de Lauzun are shining examples of conjugal devotion.

The subjugation of Madame du Deffand, reputed to be the wittiest woman in Paris, in whose salon the highest of the aristocracy mingled with the ablest of the men of letters, was the next to be attempted by Madame Necker. Madame du Deffand permitted herself to be courted, always seeking to escape from the insatiable ennui by which she was devoured, of this concealed beneath a gay exterior, her gay world knew little. We have seen Madame Necker at Ferney as unhappy Suzanne Curchod. She had kept in touch with Voltaire, and writes to inform him that she had made the acquaintance of his old friend :

“I have become acquainted with Madame du Deffand. Your correspondence and your opinion excited my curiosity. She is still very brilliant and that she has lost in feeling she has made up by her intellect. She is happy and gay, for she only looks at things through your eyes.”

So Madame du Deffand appeared to Madame Necker, who was not wanting in discernment. Neither age nor a dreadful infirmity, nor the betrayal by those she loved and on whom she counted, could crush or quench the spirit of the old, witty, profound, fascinating woman who at twenty captured and kept and warmed the heart of cynical, blasé Horace Walpole of fifty. She wrote to him, as Madame Necker had to Voltaire, of this meeting :

Phases of France

“To-morrow I shall be going to a supper where I would send willingly some one in my place : it is at Saint Ouen, with M. and Madame Necker ; they asked me because I have been given the reputation of a *bel esprit* who did not like *beaux esprits*. That appeared to them a rarity worthy of curiosity. I have been foolish enough to make this acquaintance, and when I ask myself why, I blush to discover that it is fear of ennui and that I am often as imbecile as Grebouille, who threw himself into the water for fear of the rain.”

At the beginning of their acquaintance Madame du Deffand invariably visited Saint Ouen once a week. Her judgment of the character of Madame Necker is, as usual, though not sympathetic, singularly correct : “ Full of self love, but a worthy person.” She ended by preferring Necker to his wife. She hoped much from his political career—more than she had from that of Turgot, though she felt far from sure that anyone could now save the financial situation.

Madame Necker was in one sense unique, for she alone brought together the members of the rival societies of Paris. She lived on good terms with such opposing personalities as Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand ; she was a friend of unfortunate Julie de Lespinasse as well as of the all-powerful Maréchale de Luxembourg. The Comtesse de Boufflers, the divinity of the Temple ; her niece, the Vicomtesse de Cambise, with the Comtesse d'Houdetot, Rousseau's divinity ; the Princesse

Madame Necker

Hénin and the Comtesse de Broglie, all were in her salon.

Among Madame Necker's habitués two were preferred—Buffon and Thomas. The latter, director of the Academy and much admired in his day, was one of the first friends Madame Necker made in Paris, and their intimacy increased with years, until his death at fifty. They were drawn together by similar tastes. Each serious, intense, inexpressible, yet somewhat stiff and stilted, the intellectual in both Thomas and Buffon appealed to the same strain in Madame Necker. Buffon was the most admiring of all Madame Necker's admiring friends. He was thirty years the elder. Five years had elapsed since the death of his wife when the great naturalist and Madame Necker met, and from that time forth she personified his ideal. In truth he was in love with Madame Necker, and there is always a passionate note in this platonic friendship comparable from Buffon's large and rich nature. He calls her "his noble, his grand, his sublime friend."

Constantly and in grandiloquent periods Buffon came to Madame Necker. Time but increased the strength of his affection. On July 18, 1781, he wrote: "I love and respect you above any whom I have ever loved." She took him for her confidant when her health failing, confessed her fears and anxieties, her dread of old age; Buffon was much affected by her sufferings. His long and sympathetic letters are in contrast to the gay, graceful, super-

Phases of France

ficial touch demanded by the taste of the time, but men like the famous savant cannot be coerced into a fashion or a type. His tributes redounded to the glory of Madame Necker; before the great Buffon even Voltaire was modest.

In 1788 she had to mourn his death, and she was with him when he died.

The second half of Madame Necker's life was clouded by continual bad health. At all times of a serious disposition, she was now inclined to melancholy, and the depression of spirits from which she suffered is reflected in the thoughts which she has in the habit of committing to paper. As her career began to decline and her husband's to rise, she tormented herself with the fear that he would cease to love her; she was even a little jealous of her daughter, who early showed the brilliancy of mind and independence of character with which Madame de Staël she dismayed Napoleon.

The salon of Madame Necker had changed in character. Her husband's political writings had been so well received that she advised him to give up his share in the bank and to turn his attention entirely to politics. Her foresight seemed justified when he was appointed, in 1776, directeur-général du Trésor royal. His name commanded attention in the political as in the financial world, and politicians, grands seigneurs who were in sympathy with politics, strangers of note and foreign ambassadors were alike anxious to show their respect to the famous man. But Madame Necker's egotistical apprehensions appeared to be justified. Scarcely arrived at the zenith, little by little her star began to pale

Phases of France

before her daughter's rising genius, and the daughter began imperceptibly to take her mother's place in the enlarged circle.

The time had come to consider this daughter's future. The question of her marriage was a delicate, if not a difficult, matter, on account of her parents' Protestant faith. Since the revocation of the edict of Nantes not a Protestant was left in France of enough consequence to aspire to the hand of Mademoiselle Necker ; had a Catholic nobleman wished to marry her he could not at that time have found a priest to perform the ceremony, and civil marriage was then unknown. Her parents therefore must needs look outside France for a suitable husband for their daughter.

It was at this moment—in 1783—that Madame Necker met the younger Pitt. Anglomania was at its height and, unnecessary to say, Pitt, only twenty-four, but ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, had Paris at his feet ; the salons, the Court, men of letters, women of fashion, all vied for his society. Perhaps, in dreaming of marriage between her daughter and Pitt, Madame Necker thought of herself and Gibbon, and that her youthful visions of an English home would, in some occult fashion, be realized through her daughter. Did she weave such fancies they were soon dispelled ; Germaine Necker refused to entertain the idea for a moment—it is doubtful if Pitt ever heard of the proposal at all—and in January of 1786 she was married to Baron de Staël-Holstein who, through this marriage,

Madame Necker

was advanced by Gustave III from his place as simple attaché at the Swedish embassy to the post of ambassador.

The seven years between 1781 and 1788, which were, in spite of his retirement, the period of her husband's greatest fame, were a period of decadence for Madame Necker. Her health became more and more precarious, and her brilliant daughter, whom marriage had launched into society, now not a little superseded her mother, whose predilection and influence were primarily literary, in the more political salon of the rue Bergère, to which they retired from the hotel in the rue des Petits Champs—the official abode of the Controleur-Général.

Necker's fall resembled that of the Duc de Choiseul. Never had he been so personally popular. His work at the Treasury had given him the moral support of the entire country. He was visited by men of all parties, and inundated by letters expressing regret, regard and sympathy from all sections of society in France and from foreign countries. Their hotel in the rue Bergère and the château of Saint-Ouen rivalled Chanteloup of the previous reign in the way in which public opinion, of which the fallen Minister had always been the advocate, rallied to his support in his wife's salon. The Marquis Caraccioli offered, in the name of his government, the administration of the Two Sicilies. Catherine II wrote in his praise. England Edmund Burke eulogized his financial

Phases of France

methods and his conduct. In 1787, however, by reason of his justificatory *Mémoire* in answer to an attack by Calonne, he was banished by lettre de cachet forty leagues from Paris. The power of the economists, Madame Necker's devoted adherents, was at its height, all their influence was exerted in her husband's behalf, and the next year he was again called to power. Like the Duc de Choiseul again, he was greeted by the populace as another Sully: but skilful as was Necker on questions of finance, he was not the man to cope with the situation with which he was confronted on his return to power in 1788. Sensitive, slow and hesitating, irresolute when he should have been unbending, after he had summoned the States-General he found himself unable to handle it and powerless to stem the revolutionary current. The public, lately so warm in his defence, began to cool; detested by the Court as the author of the Revolution, and by the Third Estate as the friend of the monarchy, unsupported by country or King, his conduct at the meetings of the States-General and at the Assembly was timid, weak and vacillating. Amazed and troubled by the eccentricities of his genius, the awkward stiffness of the Genevese prevented him, when he would have wished, from properly receiving Mirabeau's advances, and his career was ended. But we are forestalling events. In 1789 Necker was dismissed for the second time. He and his wife were entertaining at dinner when he received the order of exile from the King.

Madame Necker

Putting the letter into his pocket he resumed his conversation. The dinner ended, he told his wife and, without changing their dress, without a word even to their daughter, they entered their carriage, and travelled as fast as relays could take them to the nearest frontier. But the fall of the Bastille, July 14, was the cause of Necker's immediate recall and a second return—a return which, in spite of the popular acclamation which his entrance into Paris excited, was, as he himself expressed it in a letter to his brother—July 24, 1789—a “return into the gulf.”

Their flight in 1790, when Necker's statesmanship had been thoroughly tested and his incapacity abundantly proved, was beset with serious danger. They were recognized, and all along their route the people cried after them that they were carrying off the public funds. At Arcis-sur-Aube they were held till an order from the Assembly released them. They were again stopped at Vesoul, but after nearly a month spent in constant alarm they arrived at Coppet in Switzerland. Madame Necker had returned to her native land.

At Coppet—which had been purchased some years previously—near Geneva and the scenes of her youth, Madame Necker passed the remainder of her life in melancholy seclusion, sometimes brightened by visits from Gibbon, who was living at Lausanne. Money, lands, everything which had been left in France were confiscated. The fallen minister and his wife were in great distress of mind

Phases of France

regarding the fate of their friends, for whom Madame de Staël, who had joined them, planned ingenious escapes, and she succeeded in saving many valuable lives, but the fleeing émigrés generally passed by Coppet, looking upon the disgraced minister not a little as the cause of their misfortunes.

It was Madame Necker's supreme desire that she should not survive her husband, and her wish was granted. Her ambition had been greater than her strength. Too sensitive to withstand the attacks and abuse which follow upon public life, the ups and downs of his career told disastrously upon her delicate frame, and the strain of his last years of office, the death of Thomas and of Buffon, the loss of her brilliant society and, finally, the Revolutionary torment, weighed upon her spirits, completing the overthrow of her already undermined health. Her death occurred, ten years before her husband's, on May 6, 1794, at the age of fifty-seven, and her body was placed in the tomb whose erection she had herself supervised, and which became the final resting-place of her husband and her daughter.

I have as yet said nothing of Madame Necker's writings, which were collected and published by her husband after her death, and are now somewhat rare. They are intimate writings and are chiefly extracts from her journals, and none probably were ever meant for public circulation. They are markedly religious in character. Madame Necker was always trying to improve herself, and rules of conduct and of grammatical construction are to be found on the same page. "The only way to understand one's thoughts is to write them down," she wrote; subjective and conscientious, she was always communing with herself. Maxims, portraits, all that she wrote, indicate her painstaking disposition and her independence of thought, nor are they without a certain philosophy. But she was wanting in humour, and her anecdotes are no longer interesting. In *Pensées et Souvenirs* is revealed something of the trouble she took to please, efforts which it is impossible to connect with a born Frenchwoman to whom ease, grace, and wit come by nature. Her literary likings are shown by the fact that she made a prose translation of Gray's *legy*. Its pensive note struck an answering chord in her susceptible temperament and, with her serious outlook on life, she liked anything which

Phases of France

taught a lesson. Buffon's mind exerted a paramount influence over Madame Necker, and many of her pages are devoted to an analysis of his writings, from his theories to his style. A selection of her moral observations, which are at times both acute and profound, and which are always marked by spiritual elevation, would bear republishing. Whether or no the twentieth century enjoys a reputation for a higher personal morality than the eighteenth, there is less written for readers inclined to literature of this character in our age than there was in that severely judged epoch.

It could not but strike her old Swiss friends as strange that the pious daughter of the Calvinist pastor should be happy in a society of avowed freethinkers. When reproached for this by Moul-tou, she defended herself in an admirable reply : " I receive atheists, why not ? They are unhappy friends." Madame Necker happily combined an emotional temperament with intellect, she pierced the veneer and frequently perceived the religious sentiment still alive behind the avowed sceptic. " A Tartufe often is found beneath the ugly veil of atheism."

Her liberality was the more remarkable because she always remained intensely fervent in faith. Neither her own nor her husband's belief or practice ever altered ; they had the courage of their convictions and, though their creed was different to that about them, they clung to and practised it. But it is to be observed that although her piety

Madame Necker

singles Madame Necker out from her contemporaries, she was not without the liberal spirit which was an essential of every salon.

The salon of Madame Necker was not philosophical, though the philosophers made its strength. They were there because they were also men of letters—not for their philosophy but in spite of it. And her salon could hardly be called political, though she started, encouraged and assisted—even planned—Necker's political career. The politician was her daughter. By the time Necker arrived at power his wife's powers were waning, and her place in her salon was more or less filled by Madame de Staël.

To turn to another phase of Madame Necker's character, she has not in our day been given the place she deserves as a philanthropist. It was a radical departure in that age for women outside the religious orders to take part in public charities, and her interest took an eminently practical form. The first hospital in Paris where patients were given separate beds was founded and directed by her. She was also one of the first to propose prison reforms and, owing to her, female prisoners were allowed nuns as warders. In her energetic philanthropy Madame Necker outdid her friend Madame Geoffrin. Madame Necker's benevolence, under the guise of public rather than of private charity, of reform rather than of almsgiving, had wider and more lasting results, and the reforms which she originated survived her.

Phases of France

Madame Necker was the best educated and the least cultivated and spirituelle among the leaders of the French literary salons, and she never succeeded in acquiring the *bon air* of her aristocratic friends. Brought up in a Republic, she never understood the subtleties of manner obligatory at a Court. Her foreign origin also was evident. She neither wrote, spoke, acted, nor thought like a Frenchwoman. There was a pretension in her manner which was not to be found in the society to which she was admitted, and she always remained something of the schoolmistress. Her attempts to please were often clumsy. She even offended, gave wrong impressions, and laid herself open to adverse criticism by a too eager manner, a too effusive welcome. This was largely owing to simplicity of character, but such was hardly the manner required by *bon ton*. It is curious to observe, however, that in a discussion whether one's judgment of persons should be based on instinct or on knowledge of the world, the aristocratic and astute old Marquise du Deffand argued in favour of instinct, while the simple pastor's daughter defended the *convénances*. She was too autocratic in her circle, and her guests felt the same burdensome restrictions of which they complained at Madame Geoffrin's. But these defects were redeemed by the substantial qualities of her character.

Madame Necker was, after all, the product of her race and origin, tempered by her environment. She was sensible, direct and well intentioned, dominated from a very early age by one of the most

Madame Necker

powerful of human passions—that of ambition. She had strong affections, but reason always guided sentiment, and she had no sooner married Necker than she perceived that it was only by means of a salon that she could attain the position which she desired. Unlike her predecessors and contemporaries, she was uninfluenced by the tradition, by the usage, or by the national characteristics of the country in which she lived, she was handicapped in her career by her foreign origin, but she recognized with her simple common sense the power which clever women could obtain by attracting to them social and intellectual adherents.

Madame Necker is the only protestant among the directors of the salons, and by reason of a catholic liberality of spirit this added to the richness and variety of her salon, the largest, as it was the last, of those memorable historical social assemblies which, in company with its predecessors—and more than any—was held directly responsible for the Revolution. Madame Necker, a protestant and a foreigner unable quite to understand the delicate nuances of French society, is, as I began by saying, the most striking instance of the importance of the social and intellectual phase of eighteenth century France which is concisely summed up in the phrase—the salons.

Of the last phase of the pre-Revolutionary literary salons Madame Necker is the typical representative—of those gatherings in which the influence of women was an intellectual force, encouraging and stimu-

Phases of France

lating men of letters, and aiding in the expression of ideas. Born to no advantages of high birth or of wealth, Madame Necker won and controlled a commanding position by force of character and mind and she signalizes accordingly the force of intellect in France.

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